Class 92 Book P26cE

General Theological Seminary Library

CHELSEA SQUARE, NEW YORK

Purchased from the fund bequeathed to the Seminary by

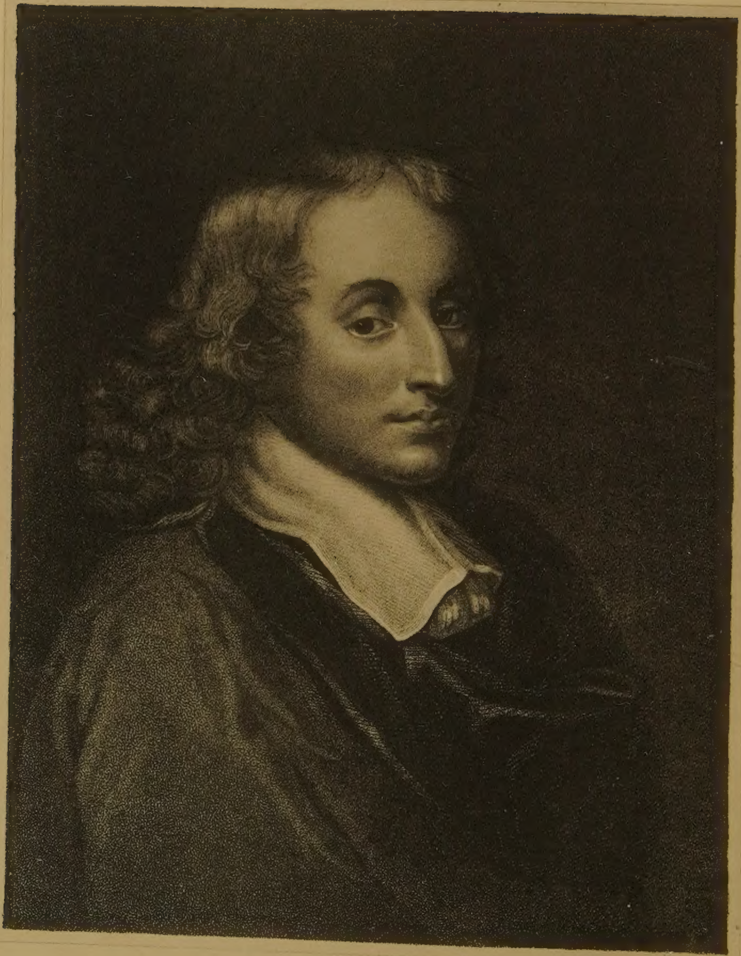
EUGENE AUGUSTUS HOFFMAN, D. D.

DEAN 1879-1902

# PASCAL

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION BY

LILIAN A. CLARE



# PASCAL

By

JACQUES CHEVALIER

GEN. THEO. SEMINARY
LIBRARY
NEW YORK

LONDON
SHEED & WARD
1930

92
P26eE

90032

First published April 1930
by Sheed & Ward,
31 Paternoster Row,
London, E.C.4

# DEDICATION

The English version of these lectures on Pascal, delivered to the students of Grenoble in 1920-21, is dedicated by the lecturer to his many friends in Great Britain and America, in the hope that the English-speaking peoples, like his own countrymen, will find in Pascal "a guide, philosopher and friend"—a guide towards truth, and a friend in the time of affliction.

*Grenoble*, 9th February, 1930.

# AUTHOR'S NOTE

All the quotations from Pascal to be found in this book refer to the Œuvres *de Blaise Pascal*, published in the *Grands Écrivains de la France* series by Léon Brunschvicg, Pierre Boutroux and Félix Gazier in fourteen volumes published by Hachette, Paris, 1904-14, and further, to the smaller edition of the *Pensées et Opuscules* by Brunschvicg (Hachette). They should be read thus:

"II, 249; 88" means *Grands Écrivains* edition, Vol. II, p. 249; smaller edition, p. 88. *395* means *Penseés*, No. 395, according to the numbering adopted by Brunschvicg in his two editions, and reproduced by the editor of the *Pensées* in the "Lutetia" collection with a preface by Faguet, and also by the editor of the *Pensées* in the "Gallia" collection with an introduction by Boutroux.[1]

*430*: XIII, 333; 524 means *Pensées*, No. 430; *Grands Écrivains* ed., Vol. XIII, p. 333; smaller edition, p. 524.

The *Grands Écrivains* edition is extremely valuable, and it is very complete, despite the regrettable absence of two of the *Discours* by Filleau de la Chaise. It must, however, be handled discreetly, for it contains a number of *errata* which have not been corrected; besides, the editor in chief, having seen and possibly discovered Christianity through Jansenism, has been inclined to attribute to the latter what Pascal in many cases has borrowed from the former, and that contains, moreover, nothing but what is really Christian, as, for example, Pascal's statement (common to all Catholics) that grace is essential to charity or love of God, and to good works. This circumstance results in a certain distortion of the view which is still more intensified by a distinctly "idealistic" tendency in the interpretation and the criticism of a doctrine which is the very opposite of modern "idealism." With these exceptions, one can but praise the authors of this, in many respects, masterly edition.

---

[1] This numbering is also adopted in the author's recent edition of the *Pensées* (Gabalda, Paris, 3rd ed. 1927) and a concordance table at the end of the book enables the reader of this volume to use it with advantage as a book of reference (Translator's note).

As will be seen, I have paid particular attention to two aspects of Pascal's thought, both of which appear to me of fundamental importance, although on differing planes and differing in kind. These are the scientific and the theological aspects. Upon the first, or rather, upon the mathematical part of it, I have had to content myself with indicating the results of research undertaken with my colleague and friend Maurice Janet, for which I had agreed with Pierre Boutroux shortly before his death. As to the second which, in Pascal's own estimation, is pre-eminent above all the rest, I owe more than I can express to the signally illuminating insight of my old friend,[1] to whom my *Descartes* already owes so much. I trust that he and all others whose wisdom and intelligence have been of service to me may find in this book a testimony to my gratitude.

In Scriptural quotations the English versions of Douay (1609) and Rheims (1582) have been followed.

[1] M. Guillaume Pouget.

# CONTENTS

Page

I Pascal and his times—The revival of Paganism—The renewal of Catholic life . . . . 11

II Pascal's youth (1623-1646)—The great vacuum experiment . . . . . . . 44

III From Pascal's first to his final conversion (1646-1654)—His experience of the world and his experience of God . . . . . . 72

IV Pascal at Port Royal—The *Lettres provinciales* (1655-1657) . . . . . . . 98

V Pascal's later years—His mathematical discoveries—His defence of the Christian religion . 124

VI Pascal's method . . . . . . . 152

VII The *Pensées*—Man's wretchedness apart from God—The two Infinites—Human justice . 185

VIII The *Pensées*—Man's greatness with God—The wager argument . . . . . . 219

IX The heart and the order of Charity—Conclusions 255

APPENDICES . . . . . . . . 305

INDEX . . . . . . . . . 331

# PASCAL

## I

### PASCAL AND HIS TIMES
### THE REVIVAL OF PAGANISM
### THE RENEWAL OF CATHOLIC LIFE

WHO is there still unacquainted with that famous page in Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*, wherein he speaks of Pascal? Let us read it over again, however, that we may not have to paraphrase it.[1]

> "There was once a man who, at twelve years of age, with a few strokes and circles, discovered mathematics; at sixteen he had written the most learned treatise on conic sections known since classical times; at nineteen reduced to machinery a science existing wholly in the intellect; and at twenty-three had demonstrated the phenomena of atmospheric pressure and demolished one of the greatest errors in the physics of the ancients. This man, at an age when other men are scarcely conscious of themselves, had completed the circle of the human sciences, perceived their vacuity and turned his thoughts to religious matters, and from this time until his death (which occurred in his thirty-ninth year), always weakly and ailing, he established on a permanent basis the language spoken by Bossuet and Racine, and afforded a model of the most finished sarcasm as of the most profound reasoning. Finally, as a diversion in the brief intervals of his suffering, he resolved one of the most complex

---

[1] Part III, Bk. II, chap. vi.

mathematical problems, and put on paper thoughts having their source as much in the Divine as in human nature. This stupendous genius was known as Blaise Pascal."

Such was the man whom we shall strive to recall to life through his works, the man from whom we shall demand enlightenment upon our nature, our place in the universe, and our future destiny.

In many respects Pascal may be regarded as the man who most fully represents the spirit of the French. What Plato is to Greece, Dante to Italy, Cervantes and St. Teresa to Spain, and Shakespeare to England, Pascal is to France. Quite as much as, and possibly more than, any of these national examples Pascal is the incarnation of the finest spirit of his country. As scientist, thinker, artist, man, in his most exquisite irony as in his most merciless satire, in his most condensed statements as in his greatest eloquence and his loftiest poetic flights, in the logical process of both thought and deed, and finally in the highest and purest personal spirituality, Pascal, even if he has been equalled, has never been surpassed, and no other has united in his own person so many diverse talents. In his ardent genius are concentrated all the gifts that characterize French thought and form its own peculiar nature—the *esprit de géometrie* and the *esprit de finesse*, rhetoric combined with sentiment, a feeling for the positive and a faith in the ideal, a submission to facts, but only in order to out-distance them even whilst investigating them, and reliance on the Infinite alone, because the Infinite alone can give to him who seeks infinity, who believes in it and loves it, the reason for everything, the clue to the enigma and the remedy for all our ills, in Divine joy and peace.

Such was Pascal. As the years pass his renown has increased, and it will go on increasing. In proportion as the genius of France develops and thrives, and in proportion as the inner life of each one of us grows more mature, we understand him better, and as we understand him better, he seems to us at once both greater, and more akin to ourselves, and also more widely human.

It is not possible to sum up such men all at once. Indeed, I believe that we can never compass them entirely, for their genius, like Nature, is inexhaustible, and surpasses all ordinary estimates.

Nevertheless, our own age will have had the merit of restoring Pascal's true likeness from the actual text of the *Pensées*. If the author of the *Provinciales* and the *Pensées* exercised on his own age a direct and profound influence,[1] an influence which has increased with the passing of the years, it was not long before the spell of passions, interests, and party spirit, caused certain traits of his character and his work to be accentuated; some were masked and others altered to the extent of distorting the whole and substituting a fictitious personage for the real man. For a long time ridiculous stories were circulated about him, and it is only in our own days that we have begun to estimate them at their true value. Some, like Voltaire, Rousseau, and others of the eighteenth century, regarded him as a fanatic and sectary, a party man, or a dupe. Others accused him of extravagant pessimism or of inflamed Jansenism, of excessive mysticism, or invincible scepticism.[2] Some indeed, carried away by their "desire to attack this giant" and to strike a deadly blow at this "conqueror of so many minds,"[3] even tried to make him out a sick man, unbalanced, a madman.[1]

---

[1] Upon the subject of the influence of the *Provinciales* upon Bossuet, Boileau, Molière, La Fontaine, Racine, Brunetière's *Manuel d'histoire de la littérature française* should be consulted. Pascal's influence on Catholic apologetics will be seen in V. Giraud: *Blaise Pascal*, Paris, Fontemoing, 3rd ed. 1910, pp. 171-5.

[2] The Abbé Villars reproaches Paschase (Pascal) with furnishing, although involuntarily, a weapon for the Pyrrhonists. (E. Droz. *Étude sur le scepticisme de Pascal considéré dans le livre des "Pensées,"* 1886.) As to the thesis of his scepticism, it was postulated by Victor Cousin in 1844, and commonly accepted since, as many works testify. According to this thesis, Pascal could escape the terrors of doubt only by plunging into extreme mysticism, into fideism, say some, and into fanaticism, say others. Droz has very properly demonstrated that Pascal was not sceptical, either in method or doctrine, but that the "philosophers" could not forgive him for having spoken so ill of "philosophy," and since he renounced their philosophy, they accused him of denying reason.

[3] Voltaire, *Lettres à M. de Formont*, (June-July, 1733).

To-day, save for a small minority of dilettanti whose professed contempt for Pascal is homage rendered to his genius, all French people are one in their admiration and love of Pascal; all, whatever the party or creed to which they adhere, whatever their inmost beliefs, or tendencies, a Sainte-Beuve or a Joseph Bertrand, a Sully Prudhomme, a Bourget, or a Barrès, a Vinet, a Duhem, or a Boutroux, and numbers of others, not excepting the Jesuits, whom he had used somewhat ill, have studied Pascal, zealously applied his principles, proclaiming his peculiar affinity with our age, his profound humanity, and the decisive influence he has had upon the orientation of their lives and their thought.[2]

As a philosopher Pascal has been still longer misjudged. Voltaire maintains that he did not combine true philosophy with his mathematics and his rhetoric; Victor Cousin denies him "the creative spirit" (though it is open to doubt whether Cousin was a judge of the creative spirit); Renouvier considers him too personal, too much preoccupied with his own ego to be counted as a philosopher (as if, to be a philosopher, one must needs cease to be a man!); and since he did not confine his thought to a *system*, the classic treatises of the history of philosophy did not always do him the honour of mentioning him. We have had to await these latter years, to await the war, indeed, for Pascal as a thinker to be given his rightful place—the first. This is because the war has reminded us, or has revealed to us, what philosophy should be—not an empty rhetorical juggling with concepts, but the answer to the questions that a man puts to himself face to face with death. And in this sense who deserves the title of philosopher more than Pascal? In his sketch of philosophy[1] Henri Bergson asserts that "Descartes and Pascal are the great representatives of the two forms or methods of thought between which the modern spirit is divided." In his lectures at the Sorbonne in 1916, Victor Delbos places Pascal side by side with Descartes.[2] In fact, with the passing of time Descartes and Pascal will no doubt appear to be the two giants of modern thought, as were Plato and Aristotle in classical times.

---

[1] This was the theory of Voltaire, La Mettrie, Condorcet, Lélut, and possibly too, with a slight difference, that of the Olympian, Goethe. Giraud, *op. cit.* p. 228, note.

[2] Giraud, *op. cit.* pp. 2-6.

But the French Plato was more than a philosopher; he was a man, and a man who was not, like Descartes, satisfied with methodical research and tranquil possession of the truth, but one who sought for it "in anguish" (*421*) who knew, experienced, suffered, and lived through, renewing them by reviving them once more, all the fancies and all the feelings that are the lot of man. There is nothing that affects human beings that was not known to this "many-sided spirit, in whom nature seemed to have kindled as many torches as she has mysterious recesses to explore, from the infinite spaces in which matter gravitates, to the deepest abysses of the human consciousness."[3] Yet more; at certain times he seems to descend further even than we can into the very profundities of our ego, and reveal us to ourselves.

---

[1] This sketch was written on the occasion of the San Francisco Exhibition for the Larousse collection "*La science française.*" It is from Pascal that Bergson derives the current "that may be called sentimental, on condition that the word *sentiment* be taken in the sense given to it in the seventeenth century, including in it all knowledge that is immediate and intuitive." And he goes on: "Pascal introduced into philosophy a certain way of thinking that is not pure reason, since it corrects by the *esprit de finesse* the mathematical part of the reasoning; and that is not mystic contemplation either, since it arrives at results that are capable of being examined and verified by the world at large." Thus from Descartes and from Pascal, as from two springs, proceed the two great currents of modern philosophy; the first more directly visible, but the second probably the more profound, as Bergson himself remarked to me.

[2] *La philosophie française*, lectures edited by Maurice Blondel, 1919. *Vide* an interesting chapter on Descartes and Pascal in Brunschvicg's little book "*Nature et liberté*" (Paris, Flammarion, 1921). It does not however seem quite accurate to define the currents proceeding from Descartes and Pascal as "the two antagonistic currents of rationality and irrationality" (p. xi); *the denial of reasoning reason*, in Pascal, is conceived as *eminently reasonable*, and, as Delbos notes (p. 90) "in him thought remains present in all that he affirms beyond reason, and even to a certain point of view against reason." *Vide* Boutroux' preface to Stewart's *Holiness of Pascal* (French translation, Bloud, 1918).

[3] Sully Prudhomme, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, July 15, 1908, p. 336.

It is because of this quality in him that when a human being, refusing to listen to the clamour of the outside world or to be blinded by his foes within, desires to commune with his own soul and interrogate his own consciousness, he addresses himself to Pascal as to a guide, a confidant, a friend. I know that to many his little book was a loved companion at the front; in the valise or kitbag there was always room for the *Pensées*. We used to cherish him as one of the mainstays of our hours of solitude, weariness, and physical and moral anguish; he was for us a viaticum, and no doubt many felt more or less dimly what the subaltern Jean Bouvier expressed in words that are graven on the memory:

> "We know that *the finite is annihilated when face to face with the infinite and becomes pure nothingness*, but we hold our heads high without boastfulness; we are finite beings, transfigured by a cause which surpasses our efforts and attains to the Absolute, the Infinite. Thus, far from being humiliated, we are growing greater: the things of eternity alone have power to move us, and all that is finite within or around us interests us no longer. . . In former days we used to look at life, and sometimes from a distance, at death, and still further removed from us, at eternity. To-day it is from afar that we look at life, death is near us, and perhaps nearer still is eternity. Thus it is that we have advanced a pace, a long pace, and we find ourselves on the same heights as thou, Oh sage of Port Royal! And thou art our great friend, Pascal, because thou hast not disappointed us, for thou hast gone before us and thou dost welcome us at the very place where we would have wished to be welcomed, and thou dost give our souls the nourishment they need."[1]

---

[1] This fine meditation was written at the Hadol camp, and published (Feb. 1916) in *La Marmite*, a "gazette from the front, appearing at irregular intervals until the victory." A letter of Jean Bouvier's of Jan. 1916, says: "I am always reading Pascal, and he is an infinite source of thought. . . We are, moreover, a group of subalterns who travel along the great roads of France with the Bible, the *Imitation of Christ*, Pascal's *Pensées* and other edifying books as a viaticum." (*L'Ascension d'une âme*, pp. 92-3.)

These lines were written face to face with death. And indeed Pascal is one of those whom one can well read in the presence of death.

This is what we must not forget in studying Pascal. We cannot treat his philosophy as we should that of any other. A genius so exalted and so individual, as Boutroux remarked at the beginning of his Study,[1] must be approached in a spirit of respect, profound sympathy and meek abandonment. Before writing, Pascal used to fall on his knees, and we, too, must recollect ourselves if we desire to understand him.

We shall not approach him directly as yet. Although by his lofty genius he outstripped his age and his surroundings, he was yet closely connected with them; his age, with its greatness and some of its weaknesses, is reflected in him, and he affords us a faithful likeness of it, though it is a likeness that has been specially enlarged and refined. No genius was more personal than Pascal's, but his personality was not merely egoistic and introspective; it gives us a living synthesis of all that was going on around him, behind as well as in advance of him.

The age which gave birth to Pascal was an age effervescing with ideas, sentiments, tendencies, often contradictory, the result of which remained a matter of doubt for several years. Taking it altogether, it was one of the most fruitful epochs of French thought.

I have endeavoured elsewhere[2] to trace the main lines of scientific advance at this period, and I shall not return to it here. It is enough to recall the fact that Galileo, the originator of the experimental method, and Descartes, the creator of universal analysis, had given a fresh impulse to the science bequeathed us by Greek antiquity which medieval Christianity, with its conception of truth, had vivified. Between Galileo and Descartes on the one hand, and Leibniz and Newton on the other, Pascal, who furnished the first model of physical experiment that was exact and complete, who laid the foundations of the integral calculus and conceived the calculus of probabilities, was the brilliant intermediary whose intuitions, forestalling future discoveries,are by no means yet exhausted. They play a large part in explaining the genesis of his work.

---

[1] Emile Boutroux, *Pascal*, in the *Grands Écrivains français* series, 1900.
[2] *Descartes* pp.-66, 100.

But Pascal was not merely a *scientist* whose discoveries, coming at that time, and emanating from his profound genius, had a definite share in the development of human thought, as of his own thought. He was a *man* and a *Christian.* The life he lived most intensely was his religious life, and it is with the religious life of his epoch that he has been most intimately associated. To separate him from his environment would debar us from understanding the part that he played therein, as well as the end he desired to attain.

The beginning of the seventeenth century was marked in France by a crisis in its religious feeling;[1] an acute crisis, such as those which characterize periods of rapid growth, and a profound crisis, like those which are due to a modification of the moral temperament and a transformation of ideas and morals. An upheaval had followed the Reformation and the Renaissance. Both these movements broke with the tradition of the Middle Ages and aimed at restoring, in the first case the Gospel, and in the second, the paganism of classical times. In the reaction due to the effect of civil wars and the great political, economic, and social disturbances which to mental vacillation add uncertainty as to the conditions of life, a spirit of uneasiness had taken possession of people, tormenting all the nations in which the unity of Christendom had been shattered. It was an uneasiness which in some instances was translated into a frenzied desire for change, a thirst for novelty, an impatience of all restraint; in others, on the contrary, it had led to an increased love of regulated order, tradition, and authority, as the seeds of spiritual life and guarantee of stability. If you look more closely you will easily perceive, beyond institutions and customs, and more profound than either, the source of these visible changes and the cause accounting for them. This cause is, as always, a religious cause, and in the religious domain a fierce combat is waged between two opposing forces, Christianity and paganism.

---

[1] For all that follows, the reader should consult the very able work of Fortunat Strowski, which has served me as a guide: *Histoire du sentiment religieux en France au dix-septième siècle. Pascal et son temps.* Plon, Paris, 5th ed.

From this period the current of paganism manifests itself all the more violently for having been restrained for so many centuries. From various positions, ranging from an occasionally sincere though more often merely superficial Catholicism to the boldest and most reckless negation, and even to outspoken atheism, stoics, sceptics, politicians, and freethinkers, batter in the breaches of the Church's traditional authority, as well as the reason's most assured beliefs.

1. *The Stoics.*—Epictetus's *Manual* was one of the breviaries of the period. It seems to have been introduced from Germany into France by some partial Reformers, such as Antoine Du Moulin and Coras, or by declared Reformers like Rivaudeau.[1] But it was not long before it was circulated in Catholic circles, and especially in the University of Louvain where, in a perceptibly different form, Stoicism flaunted itself, mingled with other influences.

The University of Louvain was then what, under the noble influence of Cardinal Mercier, it has become once more in our own times—one of the centres of Western and Christian civilization, and the living symbol of an order based upon spiritual life. Certain theologians of Louvain, staunch opponents of Luther, under the influence of the chancellor Baïus, whom Pius V had condemned in 1567, had been gradually won over to the views of the Reformers concerning grace. In opposition to the Pelagians, the

---

[1] Antoine Du Moulin, who lived at the court of Margaret of Navarre, made the first French translation of Epictetus' *Manual*, 1544. Coras, King's counsel at Toulouse, translated the *Altercation en forme de dialogue de l'empereur Adrian et du philosophe Epictète*, 1558, and Rivaudeau made another translation of the *Manual*, 1567. His translation was republished in Paris in 1914.

Massilians, and the Jesuits whom they accused of being their modern continuators, in opposition to Lessius, who at Louvain itself, according to them, sacrificed grace to the power of freewill, they had set up the more or less distorted Augustinian Christianity of Jacques Janson, the teacher of Cornelius Jansen and his predecessor in the Chair of Sacred History.

It was in this environment that the teaching and the thought of Justus Lipsius, "the most learned man left to us, with a refined and judicious wit," as Montaigne declares, were developed. Nominally an Eclectic, but actually a Christian, Justus Lipsius professed a modified Stoicism. He endeavoured to set forth, not only in the Stoic ethics but also in its metaphysics, a preparation for or an advance towards Christianity, but in order to do this he christianized Stoicism and rationalized Christianity, probably to excess. His works[1] were widely known, and the influence of his teaching was enormous; they played their part, either as a counter-stroke or as a reaction, in the development of Jansenism itself.[2]

Side by side with him, Guillaume Du Vair, a native of Auvergne, the son of a magistrate of appeal for the Duc d'Alençon, and himself a president of the Parliament of Provence, Keeper of the Seals, and Bishop, became the propagator of a more rigid, but at the same time more practicable Stoicism, which he aimed at applying to the service of God, the source and end of nature, strictly according to the dictates of reason. For two generations his doctrine enjoyed a considerable vogue.[3] It was a response to the needs of a period in which licence in morals and civil difficulties, the troubles of the present as well as the uncertainty of the future, disposed people to seek refuge in a philosophy which combined the truths of the Gospel with the wisdom of the ancients.

---

[1] *De Constantia*, 1584. *Manuductio ad philosophiam stoicam et physiologia stoicorum*, 1604.

[2] Zanta, *Renaissance du stoicisme*, p. 162; pp. 47 *et seq.*; Strowski, I, p. 278; and Giraud, *op. cit.* p. 12, note.

[3] In 1641 there were no fewer than fifteen editions of his works. Pascal, if he is to be recognized in the personage described to us by Méré (*De l'esprit*, Paris, 1677, p. 98) "admired the mental power and eloquence of M. du Vair."

This Neo-Stoicism, with its lofty moral attitude, which helped Balzac to meet death like a Christian Socrates, which inspired Descartes's "noble being," as it did Corneille's hero, was combined with a sincere Catholicism in these men, but it is by no means certain that in its essence it was not opposed to it, and even contradicted it. For the idea which is to be discovered at the base of this doctrine and behind this attitude is the Stoic idea, already to be seen in certain Humanists of the Renaissance,[1] that man is self-sufficing, that his reason can measure heaven and earth, that all his acts lie within his own powers, and that external things themselves are but what our judgment makes of them, so that in the long run everything depends on our reason and our will, which to some extent are deified. Undoubtedly in his *Sainte Philosophie*, which appeared about 1584, Du Vair recognized the inadequacy of this ethic of Stoicism which takes no notice of corrupt human nature, and as he advanced in his work he affirmed more and more clearly that it must be supplemented by Christian morality and Catholic dogma.[2] But in him, as in all the Neo-Stoics, a profound realization of human shortcomings and the need of grace, a living faith in Christ the Redeemer, was lacking; he lacked, too, the humility of the Christian. All the Stoics manifest the sin of pride, and it is this "arrogance" with which Pascal reproached them.[3]

2. *The Sceptics.*—This same arrogance was to be found in other heirs and admirers of pagan wisdom, although in them it assumed an obviously different form. I am speaking now of Montaigne and his disciples, both sceptical and political.[4] These endeavoured to adapt Stoicism to the

---

[1] *Vide* some very suggestive pages in Father Imbart de la Tour's *Les origines de la réforme en France*, II. pp. 325-8 (Paris, Hachette, 1909).

[2] Zanta *op. cit.* pp. 271-2.

[3] *Entretien avec M. de Saci*, IV, 36 ; 150.

[4] The latter term is used by Beurrier, in describing Pascal's "design" upon "atheists and politicians of this age in the matter of religion." *Déclaration à M. de Perefixe, archevêque de Paris*, X, 339.

daily conduct of life, and demanded of it nothing more than a method of living happily, finding peace within themselves, and sheltering themselves from the attacks of disease, grief, and even death, by persuading themselves that they do not touch us. It is in this sense that "to philosophize is to learn how to die" (*Essais*, I, 19). Now this "easy, cheerful, lively and, so to speak, playful" attitude, which contrasts with the "sober mien" and "gloomy look," the "uneasy, strained posture" of Stoic virtue, which makes of ignorance and indifference a soft and downy pillow for a well-shaped head, ends in a scepticism which delights in humiliating the reason, demonstrating man's absolute incapacity, jeopardizing all principles, in order to adjust itself to the customs of the day and its accepted beliefs.[1]

Here we have another prescription for wisdom, a slightly Epicurean prescription, more human and more humanistic, more seductive too, and easier to practise. But in any case, whatever may have been the religious sincerity of the savant who curbed the reason of the man deprived of all revelation to make it give way to faith, who does not feel that in this "general doubt" in which he lolls at ease Montaigne's disciple is still sinning through pride, since he is satisfied with it and seeks no further? Scepticism is but a disguised form of pride. Like Stoicism, if it does not ignore God, it does not recognize Christ.

This was the doctrine prevailing about the year 1635,[2] the date at which Montaigne's *Essays* succeeded Epictetus's *Manual* as a breviary of "right conduct" and "integrity."

---

[1] If we compare the early *Essays* (1580) with the last (1595), we cannot fail to note a certain evolution in Montaigne's thought, for he seems to pass from Stoicism to a sceptical Epicureanism (Strowski, I, 238). This Epicureanism, which is clearly to be seen in the third book of *Essais*, assumes, moreover, a Christian aspect. Montaigne, who makes profession of the Catholic faith, accepts it with the laws "under whose guardianship God has placed him"; he asks of it that it may keep his conscience at peace, but what he expects from philosophy is the art of living well "in the midst of leisured tranquillity." Pascal, brought up on Montaigne and having assiduously practised his teaching, saw that clearly. *Entretien avec M. de Saci*, IV, 48-51; 157-8.

[2] The year in which the definitive edition of the Essays appeared. The edition used by Pascal appeared in Paris in 1652.

Montaigne was a personal enemy of Port Royal; in him the Jansenists detest the natural man, filled with self-love.[1] On the contrary, he was a favourite with Miton, Méré, and all the satirical and unprejudiced wits with whom Pascal was to come in contact towards 1651, and whose attitude with regard to religious beliefs was to consider them all equally immaterial.[2]

3. *The Freethinkers.*—Stoics and sceptics formed a circumspect group of respectable people averse from scandal and anxious to maintain their tranquil state, professing a respect for religion. Side by side with them the freethinkers (*libertins*) more or less openly professed atheism.[3] They made a direct attack upon the Christian religion. "There has never been a more determined sin against religion," wrote Silhon in 1634 in his treatise on the Immortality of the Soul; "the foundations are being undermined, and they want to blow up the whole building." The number of freethinkers under Louis XIII appears to have been very great. In his *Quaestiones celeberrimae in Genesim* (1623) Father Mersenne estimates that there were no fewer than fifty thousand in Paris, but he declares also that the infidels exaggerate their number; and the author of the *Somme théologique des vérités capitales de la religion chrétienne* (1625), Father Garasse, reckons only five declared atheists, three Italians and two Frenchmen. To tell the truth it did require some "strength of mind" as Pascal notes (*225*) "but only to a certain extent," to proclaim oneself an atheist at a time when atheism was in very bad odour and led among other things to the stake:

> "It is a sorry profession that means death by fire to its professor."

---

[1] *Logique de Port Royal*, Pt. III, ch. xx.

[2] *Traité des religions comtre ceux qui les estiment toutes indifférentes*, by the pastor Amyraut, Saumur, 1631.

[3] On the subject of the freethinkers and the irreligion at the beginning of the seventeenth century, consult Brunetière, *op. cit.* p. 113; Lanson, *Histoire de la littérature française* (Hachette), 13th ed. p. 447; Strowski, I, 126, *et seq.*; the works of Lachèvre and Perrens, a study by R. Thamin in the *Revue des cours et conférences*, Jan. 1896, and L. Blanchet's article in the *Revue de métaphysique*, 1919, p. 483 *et seq.*

We have a proof of this in Vallée d'Orléans, Des Barreaux' great-uncle, who was burnt in 1574, Fontainier, burnt in 1621, and especially the renowned Vanini, a voluptuary, sophist and debauchee, who became in turns a Carmelite, an Anglican, a partizan of the Jesuits, until the day came when, intoxicated with success, he threw off the mask and went to the stake at Toulouse, proclaiming that Nature was the only God, that death led to eternal repose, and that all our ills proceeded from a "miserable Jew."

Vanini had scarcely any followers or disciples, yet with him, or just after him, France became permeated with the irreligion of Italy, that is, that cult of nature which forms the basis of the atheistic rationalism of Pomponacio and the pantheism of Bruno, as well as Campanella's deism,[1] and above all that dangerous form of unbelief which at times light-heartedly makes a comedy of religion, adorns itself, as Bossuet says,[2] with "counterfeit reasons," and kills man's religious sentiment and respect for authority by promising him the secret pleasures that unbridled senses and an unfettered mind can yield. In order to satisfy man's taste for the mysterious at any cost, it mingles with his doubts and his indiscipline all the "artifices" and "impostures" of alchemy, astrology, and occultism, those "superstitious and false sciences" which about that time were forcibly denounced by Descartes;[3] poisonous fungi, every age gives them a different name, and in all times of decay in which reason is overcast and faith lost they never fail to flourish.

It was not atheism that spread throughout France, but *libertinism;* for that name is applied both to liberty in thought and to licence in morals.

---

[1] Upon the question of deciding whether Pascal knew Bruno, Campanella and the Cardinal of Cusa, consult Blanchet, *loc. cit.* p. 491; Stewart, *op. cit.* pp. 88, 137.

[2] *Second sermon for the first Sunday in Advent*, and the *Funeral Oration for Anne of Gonzaga.*

[3] *Discours de la méthode*, Adam Tannery ed., Vol. VI, p. 6, 9. From the close of the sixteenth century theosophy had been widespread in Italy, and afterwards in the rest of Europe, through the diffusion of the books of the Cabala.

It manifested itself as the reaction consequent upon the trials of the religious wars. Then, as so often happens after great agony of mind, the long-restrained appetites and passions were let loose and ran wild without respect for order, law, the possessions of others and even life itself; for the uncertainty of what the future held developed a frenzied desire for enjoyment of the present. In his *Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps ou prétendus tels* (1623), Father Garasse has sketched for us a lifelike portrait of the free-thinkers of his time, Epicureans, parasites, and drunkards, lewd fellows also, whose school was the tavern, whose pulpit the dinner-table.

As usual, this licence was enjoined in a doctrine, or, to put it more correctly, became set in a doctrine. At one time the "libertines" seemed to seek in science a fulcrum against religion. Mersenne forbids them to use it thus, and in his *Vérité des sciences contre les sceptiques ou pyrrhoniens* (1625) boldly denounces their tactics. He shows that there cannot be incompatibility or disagreement between science and religion, for all truth, natural or supernatural, proceeds from God. He goes further, and forcibly demonstrates that we must believe in the truths of science, and that scepticism in such matters, discrediting truth, leads men's minds, especially those of the young, to scepticism in matters of religion.[1] In fact, it was from the philosophers and not from the scientists that the wits of the time demanded their weapons. They asked them of the Italians and their disciples, Pomponacio, Machiavelli, Paracelsus, and of Vanini, and Bruno too. They asked them of Theophilus, and beyond him of Rabelais and Montaigne; above all, they sought them from Pierre Charron, whom Garasse characterized as a "very pernicious ignoramus."

Strange indeed was the lot of that famous preacher and apologist, who had written his *Trois vérités* in 1593, and his *Traité de la sagesse* in 1601, with the manifest and avowed intention of defending, not only the existence of God, but the

[1] Strowski, I, 228.

excellence of the Christian religion and the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, yet whose *Sagesse* soon became the "freethinkers' breviary." They regarded it as Montaigne and Du Vair codified, especially Montaigne, and held it to be the summing-up of the whole Stoic and sceptic doctrine, which, to their eyes, stood for pagan wisdom. From it they drew their arguments against Christianity. Nevertheless, Charron's work contained, as it were, the germ of Pascalian apologetics; at any rate we find in it a great deal of material that Pascal was to utilize after changing its order.[1] How then are we to account for the strange fortunes of the book? It is quite simple. Charron, though unconsciously, distinguishes between *wisdom* and *religion* in such a way that he makes a divorce between them inevitable. And indeed, what he aims at inculcating is that human wisdom or right conduct which is, as he says, "man's excellence and perfection as man"; he owns that integrity (*prudhomie*) is general, while religion is only a special gift; that virtue may be found without religion and religion without virtue; and finally he extends his confidence in the goodness of human nature and the resources of human reason so far that, to hear him speak, one would sometimes imagine that religion is superfluous, and that a solely rational belief in God suffices the upright man whose mind is the temple of God.

The freethinkers had but to separate these premisses from the author's Christian conclusions to form a secular and lay system of ethics, an autonomous morality, not only distinct from and independent of, religion, but opposed to it. This philosophic religion was *deism*. It is expressed with crude frankness in *L'Antibigot ou les Quatrains du déiste*:[2]

---

[1] *62*. "Preface to the first part. Speak of those who have treated of self-knowledge, of the divisions of Charron, which sadden and weary us, of the confusion of Montaigne . . his foolish project of self-description." For Pascal and Charron, cf. XII, lxxv; Strowski, III, 239-250. Brunetière has very justly pointed out that Charron bridges the gulf between Montaigne and Pascal; he faithfully tried to set forth the rational bases of religion, but his contradictions arise from his not having grasped the significance of some of his assertions.

[2] Published by F. Lachèvre in his *Voltaire mourant*, 1908. cf. Strowski, I, 205.

standing between the atheist who denies the Godhead and the bigot who esteems himself superior to God,

> The deist alone adores Him in truth.

But this God whom he adores is but the ruler of the universe; he does not intervene as providence or as judge. Thus fears for the future life are useless, and equally vain is the servile and interested morality practised by Christians. The deist alone is free, reasonable and happy; religions are but superstitions; and certain people among those whom Lessius designated the "Machiavellians or politicians" did not hesitate to assert that they were mere human inventions.

We recognize these ideas; they are those which prevailed a century later with Bayle, Voltaire and the Encyclopedists. But in the seventeenth century they only appeared sporadically in isolated individuals, and most frequently, especially after the condemnation of Theophilus in 1625, hidden behind a mask. Combated and overthrown by powerful adversaries, they did not at that time succeed in becoming organized and obtrusive, or in creating a state of mind favourable to them. Almost at once the movement foundered in the disrepute into which the arrogance, pretensions, sloth and debauchery of its promoters or disciples brought it. "The freethinkers" writes Mersenne,[1] "take their evil inclinations for our common nature, so that, just as they make themselves a God according to their own fancy, so they pursue a way of living that suits their perverted tendencies and their special character." In short, they make of their instincts a rule of life. And thus, as Pascal says, "some [the Stoics] would renounce their passions and become gods"; "others [the freethinkers] would renounce their reason and become brute beasts": of such was Des Barreaux (*413*).

The danger, however, was a real one, and Pascal, like Descartes, clearly perceived it. It was the sceptics and the

---

[1] *L'Impiété des déistes, athées et libertins du temps*, by F. Marin-Mersenne of the Order of Minims, Paris, 1624, quoted by Strowski, I, 244.

"shameless" atheists of his age that Descartes had in mind when, in his systematic doubt, he was seeking to discover a truth so "established and assured that all the sceptics' most extravagant suppositions" would be "incapable of overthrowing it."[1] It was the freethinkers and the sceptics, even more than the atheists, "the Pyrrhonist cabal", its mad pride and its "ambiguous ambiguity," that Pascal had continually before his eyes when he wrote his *Apology*. He knew these men well because he had frequented their company. If for a fleeting moment, possibly, he had been seduced by certain of their qualities, they had certainly been to him a subject of "astonishment" and also of "dread," from the calm indifference they maintained with regard to a matter so momentous to us, which touches us so profoundly, as our future destiny.[2] He knew them well enough to perceive the tendency of their deism, the harbinger of atheism, "almost as far removed from the Christian religion as atheism, which is its exact opposite" (*556*). And he had clearly enough penetrated the innermost secrets of their hearts to say to them these words, words which are as lasting as libertinism: " 'I would soon have given up my pleasures,' they say, 'had I but faith.' But I tell you: 'You would soon have faith, if you gave up your pleasures' " (*240*).

While the movement of free thought which, for a time at least, would triumph in the eighteenth century, was taking shape, an opposed movement was at the same time being brought to life. This was marked by a re-awakening of faith and religious sentiment, of asceticism and even mysticism, as well as a desire for order, discipline, and tradition. The movement, which went on ever gaining in strength and intensity from the end of the sixteenth century, was to end, about the first thirty years of the seventeenth, in a marvellous renewal of Catholic life in France.

---

[1] *Discours de la méthode*, Pt. IV, Vol. VI, p. 32. cf. a letter to Mersenne of Nov 25th, 1630, Vol. I. pp. 181-2 (Adam Tannery ed.).

[2] *194*. cf. *189*, *190*, *195*, *221*, *222*, *226*, *392*.

After a period of conflict and confusion France had finally remained Catholic, because her peasantry and her intellectuals had remained loyal to the old faith. The conversion of Henry IV had been the symbol of this victory for Catholicism in France. It found at that time admirable apostles and bold defenders.

1. *The Apostles of Catholicism.*—Its apostles were recruited especially from among the religious communities, either reformed or entirely new, which arose everywhere, their activities intensified by the convergence of their individual efforts.

Without saying anything about the promoters of the communities introduced into France about that time, such as the Capuchin Friars Minor, the Ursulines, the Reformed Carmelites, who made the *Life* of St. Teresa[1] widely known we note the appearance at the end of the sixteenth century of the Order of St. Bernard, a reformed Cistercian order; then, in rapid succession, the Order of the Visitation, established at Annecy by Mme. de Chantal (1610); the congregation of the Oratory, founded in 1611 by Cardinal de Bérulle, and eminently representative of the loftiness of French spirituality; the community of St. Nicholas du Chardonnet, founded by Adrien Bourdoise (1612); that of the Benedictines of Saint-Maur (1618) which in a very short time numbered one hundred and eighty-four abbeys and conventual houses; the reformation of the Canons of St. Geneviève (1624) which made them the chief order in France, soon numbering eighty-seven monasteries; the community of St. Sulpice, established by M. Olier in 1641; the Eudists (1643); and lastly the two French communities *par excellence*, the Congregation of the Priests of the Missions and the order of Sisters of Charity founded by St. Vincent de

---

[1] The Carmel of St. Teresa was established in France by virtue of a Bull of Clement VIII, 1603. Her *Life* had been translated into French in 1601 by M. de Bretigny and the Carthusians of Bourgfontaine under the title of *La vie de la mère Thérèse de Jésus, fondatrice des religieuses et religieux carmes déchaussés et de la première règle.* Pascal, who in so many respects closely resembled the great Spanish saint, often quotes her in the *Pensées, 868, 917, 499.*

Paul between 1625 and 1633.[1] In 1623 the Holy See confided to Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, assisted by a committee of monks of various orders, the task of reforming all the ancient religious orders with the exception of the Carthusians and Jesuits, who had no need of reform. On the other hand Richelieu very ably seconded the efforts of the group of saintly personages who, led by Bourdoise, Bérulle, Condren, Vincent de Paul (raised to our altars nearly two centuries ago), worked for the deeper religious and spiritual training of the clergy, the improvement of the episcopacy, the creation of seminaries, and the re-establishment of discipline in the clerical life of France. It is from this period that we can date the high standard of our parochial clergy, whose methods of education in these days are tending to permeate the whole world. Finally, asceticism and mysticism came to life once more, and then flourished in those at that time called the Spirituals, who sometimes bordered upon illuminism, but who were in the main the inspirers of the great religious enterprises of the beginning of the seventeenth century.[2]

The two incomparable flowers of this age were two of our saints, men in whom the spirit of France was raised to its highest point, culminating in simplicity. One of them came from Savoy, the other from the Landes; they were St. Francis de Sales and St. Vincent de Paul.

St. Francis de Sales, a wonderfully well-balanced nature, kindly-disposed, charitable, averse from dispute and uniting strength with gentleness, or, better still, possessing the gentleness that is but the plenitude of strength, saw the antinomies that Calvin's relentless logic had set up melting into each other through the mysterious union of nature and grace in the bosom of love or charity—for love has an object external to ourselves, but nevertheless it does not constrain us; it binds us, though without enslaving us; it exalts and liberates us through obedience, sacrifice, and the complete abnegation of self which it demands, through the patient and scrupulous effort it requires of us, in order that we may respond to the Divine influence. "All must be done through love," St. Francis de Sales would say; "God is the God of the human heart"; His love will gratify to the full the longings of our soul and that "natural inclination to love God above all things" which is "a symbol of grace that has been forfeited." Man is the perfection of the universe, the mind is his perfection, love that of the mind and charity that of love; and thus the love of God is the aim, perfection, and excellence, of the universe."[1] This is what St. Francis repeated over and over again in a "language of spiritual delicacy and vivacity," fragrant as the flowers that grow upon the mountains of his native Savoy.

---

[1] For information respecting the religious houses in the time of Louis XIII, the reader should consult Prunel's *La renaissance catholique en France au dix-septième siècle,* Paris 1921. More than half of the religious houses for men in Paris, as well as at least two-thirds of the convents for women and most of the secular houses of the type of the Sisters of Charity, were founded in the seventeenth century, and notably in the first half of the century, for there was a singular slackening of the movement about 1650 to 1660.

[2] *Vide* Abbé Brémond's new and full *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France,* in which the religious temperaments of the period are very acutely analysed; and Georges Goyau on the Catholic revival through the example of France, and the beginnings of Jansenism (*Histoire de la nation française,* G. Hanotaux, 1922, VI, p. 395 *et seq*).

The other, St. Vincent de Paul, was the living incarnation of that Christian charity which, "having as its well-spring charity towards God, and arriving by a series of wondrous gradations at the perfection of the Divine love, does not regard the salvation of the soul only, but further provides for the needs of the body."[2] Through the practice of charity, a practice which is above all theory because it substitutes the Divine for the human;[3] through unwearied love for the weak and lowly, whom we must see in God and in the esteem in which Jesus Christ held them, and again, through the observance of communal life, Vincent showed his priests the way towards the perfect life. With apostolic zeal he taught his missionaries that the Church is a harvest-field awaiting earnest labourers; with admirable good sense he adjured them to be mistrustful of novelty, "not to depart from the path trodden by the wisest of men," to avoid precipitancy, the chief cause of a lack of success in human affairs, to follow in all things simplicity, prudence, gentleness and humility, the groundwork of charity, for "God as a rule makes use of people of little consequence to effect great things."[1] His two favourite maxims were "We must love God with arms that are aching, and with the sweat of our brow. Let us ever see Our Lord in others, that we may kindle in our hearts love for them."[2] Admirable maxims indeed, and we shall find that Pascal recognized them when he had made the round of all things; they were the final conclusions to which his spirit was raised when he had attained the threshold of holiness.

---

[1] *Œuvres de saint François de Sales, évêque et prince de Genève et docteur de l'Église,* Mackey, ed. Annecy, 1892. XII, p. 359; IV, 74, 77, 84, 137; V, 165; *Traité de l'amour de Dieu,* I, 15; II 15; I, 16; I, 18; X, I. This Pascalian doctrine of God as charity, God "felt in the heart" or in "the natural instinct," was expounded by Father Yves de Paris in his *Théologie naturelle* (1633-1636).

[2] Bull of canonization, 1737.

[3] Conference on the observance of the rule, May 17, 1658. (Abelly's Life of St. Vincent de Paul, 1664). For the completion of the portrait, cf. the *oratio* in the Missal: *Deus, qui ad evangelizandum pauperibus et ecclesiastici ordinis decorem promovendum, beatum Vincentium apostolica virtute roborasti.*

2. *The Defenders of the Catholic Faith.*—The saints struggled to combat irreligion by restoring the pure and lofty ideal of Christianity. Other men tried to make a more direct attack upon the negations of the freethinkers and upon the "laicism" of those who substituted profane for Christian motives in their conduct, and put human interests before the love of God. These men, who had entered upon the struggle in a very different spirit, were soon to clash violently. They were the Jesuits and the Jansenists.

With regard to worldly considerations and the new culture the Jesuits adopted an attitude of conciliation, in conformity with the policy pursued by their missionaries in Paraguay, Canada and China.[3] While remaining tenaciously attached to the physics of the Schoolmen, the Jesuits, following their Spanish leaders Suarez and Mariana, manifested singular discretion in all that concerns theology, apologetics, and the history of dogma, as well as law and politics. Their spirit, at once modern and traditional, tried to combine the recognition of the new intellectual trends and modern political circumstances with a steady attachment to the Catholic ideal and the Catholic conception of law as an eternal truth.[1] Their influence at that time was considerable. Even though they already inspired a certain mistrust, they had become the directors of the consciences of the social world and the educators of its youth; their schools, compared with the routine-driven universities, were of very great service, a fact of which Descartes, who was their pupil at La Flèche, has made us aware. They were not dismayed by novel ideas; promoters of a devout humanism, they did not demand of the deists, or even of the sceptics, the sacrifice of their "reason"; they simply asked of them to complete and perfect natural religion by Christian practice, to adapt the instrument to its uses (*plier la machine*), and to act as if they believed, so that they might eventually attain to faith. This was the attitude of Father Sirmond in his *Démonstration de l'immortalité de l'âme, tirée des principes de la nature* (1637), and in his *Défense de la vertu* (1641), which were violently attacked by Arnauld, but bear a curious resemblance to Pascal's *Apology for the Christian religion*.[2]

---

[1] Lecture to missionaries, Sept. 7, 1657. Abelly, I, p. 236. cf. III, 311.

[2] Abelly, I, pp. 124-26.

[3] The fifth *Provinciale*, IV, 302; cf. the words of Thomas Hurtado, to which Pascal refers (IV, 293).

As a consequence of the development of moral theology as a distinct science and of the practical requirements for the direction of the conscience, for which no infallible canon or rigid formula exists, the Jesuits were led to pay ever increasing attention to that section of morals, the object of which is to apply to special cases the decrees of the law known as *casuistry*. They did not create it, for it had always existed.[3] But since they were more concerned than others with teaching and the confessional they were in the foremost rank of those who had to study and expound its rules. This accounts for the spread, about 1640, of *probabilism*, as formulated by Vasquez, following the Dominican Medina. This system dealt with cases in which the obligation to apply the law was doubtful, and with such cases alone; it aimed at reconciling the rights of liberty with those of obedience. As opposed to the *tutiorists*, who affirmed that the law must be respected in all cases, the *probabilists* maintained that in a case of actual probability of non-obligation, man is not bound by the law. In practice, when it was a case of estimating the existence or non-existence of the probability in question, abuse was easy, and the danger of falling into a *laxity* dangerous to morality has not always been avoided.

---

[1] J. N. Figgis, *From Gerson to Grotius*, p. 190, Cambridge, 1907.

[2] L. Blanchet, *loc. cit.* p. 507 *et seq.*: pp. 627-641. The way to "*plier la machine*" is already indicated very distinctly there in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola, which Pascal seems to have read.

[3] R. Thamin, *Un problème moral dans l'antiquité*: *étude sur la casuistique*

Finally, in dogmatic theology the Jesuits elaborated a doctrine destined to play its part in human liberty and satisfy those who believed in the efficacy of human effort, against which all the views of the reformers on predestination and the enslaved will were above all directed. This was the doctrine of Molina.[1] According to this doctrine God offers to all men the supernatural help necessary to salvation, in the form of *sufficient grace*, called by Le Moine "grace by prayer."[2] But by virtue of the knowledge called *scientia media* which permits Him to know how man's will will act in all the cases that can be encountered, God can choose and offer the grace that He knows may or may not involve the assent of the freewill. Thus the same grace, in itself always really sufficient, becomes efficacious or not according as it carries or does not carry with it the adherence of the

---

*stoicienne*, Paris, 1884; J. Guiraud, *Histoire, partiale, histoire vraie*, Paris, 1917; IV, p. 183 *et seq.*

[1] Ludovici Molinæ, *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiæ donis, divina præscientia, providentia, prædestinatione et reprobatione, ad nonnullos primæ partis D. Thomæ articulos*, Lisbon, 1588. This work was passionately attacked by the Dominicans and in particular by Bañes, who was teaching at Salamanca. In 1611 the Inquisition imposed silence on both adversaries, Dominicans and Jesuits, Thomists and Molinists. The Church allowed both theories, from the time that they upheld both freewill and the necessity for grace.

[2] *De dono orandi sive de gratia ad orandum sufficiente disputatio, auctore Alphonso Le Moyne*, Paris, 1650.

will. In this way Molina believed that he had reconciled the rights of God, the Author of all good and the universal Agent, with the existence of free will, which abhors all internal or external constraint.[1]

This doctrine, like the Thomist doctrine to which it is opposed, appears to us an extremely interesting attempt, though probably a vain one,[2] to solve the problem created for Christianity by the dogma of the Divine grace, operating on man freely and at the same time infallibly. This problem, that of the relation between grace and liberty, the mysterious accord between the almighty influence of God and the free will of man, had been propounded with renewed keenness since the sixteenth century. The Reformation had placed it in the forefront, and the attention of men's minds, until then by preference directed to the future life, had been concentrated, perhaps untowardly, upon the questions of sin, conversion and justification. Calvinism, while retaining the Catholic teaching on the necessity for effort, proclaimed with Luther man's absolute powerlessness, wholly perverted as he is by original sin.[3] Against Calvinism the Jesuits, while maintaining that man is not sufficient of himself and that he needs Divine grace for his salvation, rehabilitate human nature, and with it the power of man's liberty.

There is no doubt that they were right, but were they not embarking upon a slippery path? It must not be forgotten that men in the mass are always prone to simplify things, that according to the natural disposition of our minds we constantly incline to extend every assertion to the logical extreme, the point at which it becomes false through denying or failing to recognize the contrary truth which helps it to make up the whole truth. Now did not the mass, in being thus taught the power inherent in man and in human reason and liberty, risk a failure to perceive the other aspect of the truth, namely, the necessity of *grace* for salvation? Was there no risk of its denying it? In granting humanity too much were not human beings likely to render the cross of Christ of no account, to suppress the scandal of the cross and reinstate a wholly pagan system of ethics which would suffice for the natural man?[1] This was what was happening in Poland, and was soon to be the case in England and elsewhere, with Herbert of Cherbury, and Grotius, the Socinians, those anti-trinitarian deists (Unitarians), the defenders of a philosophic, rational, and tolerant religion, based on the belief in the *unity* and the *goodness* of human nature, in man's power of saving himself by his own strength; a religion which under the cloak of Christianity was preparing to reintroduce a pagan naturalism destructive of the Christian faith—for, as Pascal says, "all who seek God apart from Jesus Christ, and who stop short at human nature . . . fall either into atheism or into deism, two things almost equally abhorrent to the Christian religion."[2]

---

[1] We know the importance this question had assumed at the beginning of the seventeenth century. After Campanella *Atheismus triumphatus*, 1631, "pagan virtue" had found a defender in La Mothe le Vayer (1641), and against this latter Arnauld wrote his treatise on the necessity of faith (pub. 1701). According to Catholic doctrine man's free acts are not sin unless they impugn the moral law, whether man is or is not in a state of grace. On the other hand, they do not deserve the reward of heaven unless they are inspired by grace.

[2] Because the relation between the finite and the Infinite absolutely exceeds our powers of knowing. *Vide* ch. IV.

[3] Imbart de la Tour, *op. cit.*

Such was the danger, real or imaginary; a danger very probably real, but also very probably exaggerated by the opponents of the Jesuits. And now, indeed, the "too accommodating" Society of Jesus was faced by the stern defenders of the Christian faith, the Jansenists. Both Jesuits and Jansenists stand out in bold relief, presenting us with two types of mind, two human aspects with regard to the truth, or what they believed to be the truth. The former, anxious above all things to spread abroad the truth and win for it the hearts and minds and conduct of men, endeavoured to render it more accessible, easier to believe and to practise. They therefore sought all the points of contact and of conciliation; in this way they approached those whom they attempted to convert; they urged them to adhere to these things first, and to reserve for later examination the points of division, the beliefs that clashed with reason, and the rules that put constraint upon conduct. The latter—concerned above all to safeguard principles, esteeming any reconciliation, even a temporary one, impossible between truth and error—presented the truth in its entirety, morality in its perfectly pure form, whatever it might cost those who were to adhere to it. They preferred to accentuate whatever there might be to offend the reason, and the constraints such a morality might put upon customary life. They aimed at making men sensible of the full price of the sacrifice the truth demanded of them; their followers were no doubt less numerous, but they were more sincere and more experienced, and their doctrine was to receive some support. The Jesuits reproached the Jansenists with sacrificing men to truth, raising barriers everywhere and making themselves inexorable judges of the good and the true—with being no longer human. The Jansenists reproached their opponents with sacrificing the truth to the interests and the passions of men, with attenuating it to bring it within the reach of all, with secretly undermining it by introducing the enemy within the fold, though the real characteristic of truth is to exclude error. In short, the Jesuit doctrine was too human, and not sufficiently divine.

---

[1] *Fifth Provinciale*, IV, 301, 304; *I Cor.* I, 17; *Gal.* V, 11. cf. *245*.

[2] *556*. The Socinianism of its author did not deter Pascal from reading and making use (especially in its Jewish sources, as is seen by *715*) of the *Traité de la vérité de la religion chrétienne* of Hugo Grotius, which appeared in Amsterdam in 1636. In it there are proofs of the existence of God and of Providence, of the truth of Christianity, the authenticity of the Old and New Testaments, the errors of Judaism and of Mahomedanism. Strowski, III, pp. 250-8.

Here we have the ineradicable opposition which existed between the Jesuits and the Jansenists; such was the source of the great conflict that was to set them by the ears.

We shall meet Port Royal and Jansenism again on our road, but it is important to place them in their period and in their own surroundings. If we are to avoid misunderstanding, we must also differentiate clearly between Port Royal and the Jansenism which in the end was grafted upon the pure and lofty doctrine of the Solitaries, hardening and, in my opinion, distorting it.[1]

The spirit of Port Royal is to be found in its entirety in two persons who played a decisive part in its beginnings—Duvergier de Hauranne, and Mother Angélique Arnauld.

Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, the future Abbé de St. Cyran, was a Basque, of whom Richelieu said: "He has a fiery temperament." In his religious life he manifested the concentrated ardour of his race; in his zealous love of his neighbour he was almost violent, and Des Lions, whom Ste-Beuve quotes, says that he spoke only "by leaps and bounds," preaching to men with irresistible power the love of God, and of the Unseen. He taught them the corruption of human nature, its salvation in and through Jesus Christ, the necessity of submitting the whole being to Him, the wrong done to God by attachment to His creatures. At Louvain Justus Lipsius had educated him both in Stoic doctrine and in a knowledge of Christian classics. Jansenius, whom he met in 1611 in Paris, and who lived with him for six years at Bayonne, initiated him in the teaching of St. Augustine and of Baïus, and directed his attention to the problem of grace. From that time, "the fire from on high" that Justus Lipsius loved to see in him was nourished with all it needed, and developed into an intense and profound, at times almost exaggerated, piety, which always subdued and captured men's sensibility.

Towards the same time, in 1608, an abbess, sixteen years of age, Angélique Arnauld, daughter of Antoine Arnauld, the lawyer, was attempting the reform of her abbey of Port-Royal-des-Champs. This was a very ancient Cistercian monastery, founded in 1209 in the wilds of the Chevreuse valley. "Port Royal is a solitude, a paradise," wrote Mme. de Sévigné on 26th January, 1674; "it is a desert in which all the devout Christians have taken refuge; it is a valley full of horror, quite fit to inspire one with the desire to save one's soul." Now in this year of grace 1608—God makes use of the meanest instruments—an unworthy Capuchin friar, preaching on the humiliation surrounding the birth of Christ, proved for Angélique the occasion of an "impulse" such that that hour, as she said, "was God's first glance at her and hers towards Him," and "resembled the dawn that in her had been ever approaching midday."[1] A second sermon by a Bernardine upon the eighth beatitude, delivered on All Saints Day, completed the work of grace, and decided her, despite her love of solitude and the resistances which she had to meet, to undertake to reform herself and her community entirely, by renouncing all her worldly possessions, entering upon a claustral existence, and devoting herself in a spirit of humility to works of charity. From the second Mère Angélique[2] we know of that most affecting experience known as the *journée du Guichet* (25th September, 1609) when the abbess refused her own father access to the convent, and fell fainting from the grief of which she was the involuntary cause. In this act we perceive Port Royal in its entirety, the Port Royal that St. Francis de Sales called his "dear delight."[3]

---

[1] Ste-Beuve, *Port-Royal*, (ed. of 1867), I, p. 35. On the history of Jansenism see A. Gazier, *Essai de bibliographie port-royaliste: Histoire générale du mouvement janséniste*, and J. Laporte, *La doctrine de Port-Royal.*

St. Cyran made acquaintance with Angélique in 1623, and became director at Port Royal in 1636. Out of the mysterious concurrence of these two influences arose the complete Port Royal of the nuns and of the Solitaries, whose spirit may be summed up in these words: obedience, poverty, penitence and joy, hearts closely united in a strict rule of silence and a careful attention to all observance, religious perfection the aim of all. The first time that St. Cyran heard the confession of Angélique's young sister, Marie-Claire, he said to her: "You must come to the penitential life with all your faculties awake. . . It is the narrow way. . . . Let your penitence be accompanied by silence, patience and self-denial, I mean that of the spirit which entails separation from all outside matters."[1] The work of Port Royal developed. Under the mildly inflexible influence of Mère Angélique, all the Arnauld family entered Port Royal; St. Cyran, that "extraordinary man," as Balzac calls him,[2] converted the great lawyer Antoine le Maître and induced him to live as one of the Solitaries in a little lean-to on the outer wall of Port Royal in Paris; he converted many others in the prison to which Richelieu sent him in 1638. His unconquerable spirit survived him and was perpetuated at Port Royal.

---

[1] *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal*, 1742, I. p. 25. This was printed in Utrecht at the expense of the Order.

[2] *Mémoires*, I pp. 44-51. cf. Ste-Beuve, *op. cit.* I, pp. 107-115.

[3] *Mémoires*, II, p. 300.

This spirit, however, began to alter.[3] The attempt at reform carried on within the bosom of the Church by a return to primitive saintliness, a return to Christ, became more and more deeply imbued by the stern, harsh, desolating doctrine which Jansenius, a professor at Louvain and afterwards Bishop of Ypres, claimed to have extracted from St. Augustine, and had set forth in his *Augustinus*.[4] The Church makes her appeal to all; to all she offers the means of salvation; and thus Catholicism, while proposing an ideal of perfect life to human beings, through maintaining in heart and will the love of perfection and the desire to approach it, admits different degrees of the same necessary perfection, which is charity. Jansenism, which in its stern rigidity did not sufficiently take human weakness into account, taught that the perfect life, that is, the penitential life, is the only way of salvation, and it maintained that, apart from the small group of the elect or the predestined for whom alone Christ died, the rest of humanity is one mass of perdition, doomed to everlasting damnation. In his desire to extirpate the Pelagian error, the fruit of reason corrupted by pride, Jansenius, whatever he may have said, only succeeded in denying the liberty of man. According to him man,[1] the slave, since the Fall, of sin and concupiscence and of the earthly delights which irresistibly lead him into evil, can only free himself by becoming the slave of righteousness, through the grace that God accords to him without respect to his own deserts, in the mystery of predestination, a grace which entices him to good through a heavenly joy that is absolutely irresistible.

---

[1] *Narration* of Mother Angélique de Saint-Jean Arnauld, in the *Mémoires*, pp. 450-457.

[2] *Œuvres*, I, p. 942; Strowski, I, 269.

[3] On this point see Brémond, *op. cit.* IV, pp, 148 *et seq:* pp. 281 *et seq.*

[4] Jansenius had discovered this doctrine in 1620, as his letters of Oct. 14, 1620 and March 5, 1621 (Brémond, IV, pp. 121-3) testify. cf. Pinthereau, *La naissance du jansénisme* (Louvain, 1654), and *Le progrès du jansénisme*, (Avignon, 1655, written under the pseudonym of Préville). The *Augustinus* appeared at Louvain in 1640, two years after the death of Jansenius, with the following title: *Cornelii Jansenii Episcopi Iprensis, Augustinus, sive doctrina sancti Augustini de humanæ naturæ sanitate, ægritudine, medicina, adversus Pelagianos et Massilienses, tribus tomis comprehensa.* The first volume exposes the Pelagian heresy and its fresh form, "semi-Christianity, semi-Pelagianism." The second expounds St. Augustine's doctrine concerning the state of human nature in its innocency, fallen human nature, and uncorrupt human nature (which, according to Jansenius, is an impossibility). The third treats of man's rehabilitation, his restoration, through grace, to the liberty he had forfeited through sin, and of free and absolute predestination. A valuable résumé of the *Augustinus* will be found in the *Histoire générale du jansénisme* by Dom. Gerberon, which appeared at Amsterdam in 1700, and was reproduced by G. Michaut in the appendices of his book *Les époques de la pensée de Pascal*, 1902.

With Stoicism, with deistic free-thought, with the partisans of natural religion, with the Jesuits themselves, there was no compromise possible. Against all these doctrines—which, said Jansenius, like the Pelagian error, proceed from human pride and, by granting efficacious power to the human will, tend to exterminate true grace and kill true piety—Jansenism asserted the total depravity of human nature, the sovereign necessity of redemption; and, to some extent nullifying the efficacy of human effort, and destroying all the bridges between it and grace, it abandoned man to the mysterious decrees of God, "like a rudderless vessel astray on the wide ocean of the Divine will."

Such were the strength and the weakness of the Port Royalists. It cannot be denied that these men had a clear consciousness of the danger which, in the eighteenth century, was about to threaten the Christian faith. They discerned and denounced the perilous sophisms concealed by absolute confidence in human nature, a belief in original goodness in man, the omnipotence of reason and of liberty, and the whole movement tending to deify humanity in order to emancipate it from religious faith and control. In ethics, politics and education they boldly, clearly, and powerfully affirmed the essential principles and the preeminent virtues: in the first place *authority*, quickened by *charity*, a virtue "so sadly lacking in our days," wrote Ste-Beuve,[1] "that it is necessary to study it in its origin, in those who have mastered it." This is the reason that Royer-Collard was able to say: "He who does not know Port Royal does not know true humanity."

---

[1] The principle of the Jansenist heresy consists in this, that, to Jansenius, both grace and the preternatural gifts bestowed by God upon the first man were not free gifts, surpassing the requirements of human nature, but were a constituent part of it and inexorably due to it; whence it follows as a consequence that original sin, by depriving us of grace and of preternatural gifts, has wholly corrupted human nature. (E. Janssens, *l'Apologétique de Pascal*, pp. 304-6).

Unfortunately, however, Jansenism introduced into Port Royal a spirit of rigidity, exclusiveness, and pride, which was not long in causing deviation in a movement wholly admirable in its beginnings, and finally led it to rebellion and almost to rupture. "We must not hurry on our results," said St. Francis de Sales to Mère Angélique,[2] "but live in peace. O my daughter, do not believe, I beg of you, that the work we have undertaken can be so quickly completed. The cherry-tree bears its fruit early, because its fruit is but cherries, which last a brief time only, but the date-palm, the prince among trees, does not bring forth its dates until a hundred years after it has been planted, according to what they tell us." It was on account of their having failed to recognize this rule of all effective and durable and true action that Jansenism, or rather Port Royal (for Jansenism was wrong in principle) finally foundered.

Pascal, who belonged to their number, judged these men with the energy, frankness and incisive accuracy that characterized him. "If there be ever a time when we should make profession of the two contraries, it is when we are blamed for omitting one. Therefore, both Jansenists and Jesuits were wrong in concealing them, but the Jansenists' was the greater wrong, for the Jesuits made a better profession of them both" (*865*).

---

[1] Ste-Beuve, *op. cit.* I, p. 23.

[2] Letter of Dec. 16, 1619; *Mémoires*, I, p. 150.

Thus the beginning of the seventeenth century, seen by the light of history, when compared with the one that preceded and the one that followed it appears to us to be a period of exceptional gravity—the time in which the tragic struggle between the Christian faith and pagan naturalism was first seen, and in which, within the fold of Christianity itself, a sharp conflict between two differing conceptions of Christian faith and practice was preparing. Of this unique moment Pascal was a "unique witness";[1] he traversed all the intellectual circles, was acquainted with all the currents and trends of his age; he was versed in science as in worldly lore; he knew Epictetus and Montaigne, Port Royal and the Jesuits; all that he borrowed from any of them he thought out for himself in the most profound and intense and personal way, making fresh material out of what he had received, adding to it almost as much as he had received, and always dominating parties, interests and ideas from the height of his soul and spirit.

[1] Strowski, I. p. 283.

## II

## PASCAL'S YOUTH (1623-1646)

## THE GREAT VACUUM EXPERIMENT

Before starting upon the study of the man himself, let us retrace the main features of the period and the environment in which he made his appearance; let us keep before us the general aspect of things in the first thirty years of the seventeenth century.

From the scientific point of view we are brought face to face with the development (side by side with the resistance offered by a moribund scholasticism and the adventurous daring of the Renaissance) of modern methods in experimental physics, the early models of which had just been furnished by Galileo, and those of mathematical analysis, the essential rules for which Descartes was preparing to formulate. As early as November 1619 Descartes had had the intuition which was to be expressed in 1637 in his analytical geometry, namely, that the world of space can be definitely translated into the world of pure quantity, and that the harmony between these two worlds, as different as imagination is from understanding, presupposes a superior order of creation, whose source is in God. From this intuition all modern science and metaphysics proceed.

When we turn to the literary, artistic, and social points of view, we note that in the midst of incredible confusion and disorder there were traces of the clear-cut lines of the classical ideal. We perceive the sketching-out of that ideal of order, good taste, moderation, perfect adaptation of form to idea, which was to fashion both language and manners and find its incarnation in the finished type of gentleman (*honnête homme*). In 1634 the *Académie française* was founded, and *Le Cid* appeared in 1637.

Finally, when we consider the religious viewpoint, we see a fierce and pitiless struggle preparing between reviving paganism and a Catholicism renewed in spirit and in discipline. Face to face with the Stoics, sceptics, and free-thinkers, opposing the arrogant philosophy which substituted the worship of human nature for the worship of God, and taught that man is self-sufficient, stood the apostles of the Christian faith, a St. Francis de Sales, a St. Vincent de Paul, a Bérulle, an Olier, a Condren and a Bourdoise—all of them notable representatives, both sublime and simple, of Christian charity. In less than thirty years the clergy in France attained their highest level of excellence, and everywhere we see arising, either recently founded or rehabilitated, the great communities which were later to link Christian civilization throughout the world with the French name and the French ideal. And beside these there already appeared, fully equipped for the struggle that was to bring them into violent collision, the two great parties which undertook the defence of the faith—the Jesuits and the Jansenists. The former reproached the latter for a Calvinistic rigour which sacrificed the souls of men to the truth, or to what they erroneously believed to be the truth; the latter reproached the former for the laxity of a doctrine which in its inordinate desire for conciliation was inclined to whittle down the truth, and by making too much allowance for human nature, ran the risk of rendering the cross of Christ of no account.

In all these different domains order and stability would at length be realized almost suddenly, and expressed in forms that remain imperishable models of the true, the beautiful, and the good. But beneath the rich harvest that was ripening there already appeared the tares of trouble and dissension which were to develop in the years to come.

Such was the environment, full of promise and of menace alike, in which Pascal grew up. It was essential to the understanding of his spiritual education and the bearing of his work that we should first of all place him in it, and now we shall see him initiated successively, or rather, simultaneously, though progressively, into the domain of science, the social world, and the entire Christian world. We shall see that to each he brought a weighty contribution—by means of the first complete physical experiment ever realized, the great experiment on the vacuum; by the first masterpiece to fix and determine our literature and our language, the *Lettres Provinciales;* and by the most admirable apology for the Christian religion ever written: the *Pensées*.

We shall study the genesis of these great works and follow the course of their development into maturity in the mind that conceived them and made them a reality. The man is of no less interest than his work, for he it is that explains it. However great his work may be, Pascal yet surpasses it, and the same is true of all great souls. We shall therefore fix our attention on the man himself; we shall endeavour to see how he assimilated the influences brought to bear on him, and try to discern the profound source of life within him, a mystery to others as to himself, the steady current untroubled by the surface eddyings of external agitations. On this condition only shall we be able to judge of the work, thought, system, of Pascal; for what the man is worth is what the system is worth.

But a man is a cosmos, above all when that man is Pascal. Has not he himself taught us that the infinity of the inner life is "of another order" than the infinity of bodies or souls (*793*) and "infinitely higher"? How are we to penetrate into that world, how shall we unravel that infinite complexity? To comprehend any being and discover the secret of a soul, a key is necessary, and what is to be the key to this great soul? A clear-sighted critic, even though a long way from the lofty heights attained by Pascal, after frequenting his society for some time, had an inkling of it.[1] Pascal is to be explained neither by his doubts, nor by his science, pessimism, or mysticism, though there was all that in him. It is his *holiness*, or rather his effort towards holiness, his aspiration to transcend himself continually in order to approach the perfection realized in Christ, that we must ever have in mind in studying Pascal.

---

[1] Ste-Beuve, *op. cit.* III, p. 388. cf. Stewart *op. cit.*

Blaise Pascal[1] was born at Clermont in Auvergne on 19th June, 1623, in a house in the Rue des Gras. His father, Étienne Pascal, was the King's elected representative President of the *Cour des Aides*[2]) at Clermont; he belonged to an old Auvergne family which seems to have been ennobled in the reign of Louis XI. Pascal's mother, Antoinette Begon, was the daughter of a Clermont merchant who had been town sheriff; she died in 1626, leaving three children, Gilberte, born in 1620, Blaise, and Jacqueline, born in 1625.

Thus Pascal was purely French, a Frenchman of Central France, attached through his forbears to that district of Auvergne which in the days of Vercingetorix was already regarded as the citadel and the centre of Gaul—a rugged, yet fertile district, the home of a very hardy race, a countryside with strongly marked contrasts, where the rich verdure of the Limagne is wedded to the austere grandeur of the Massif Central. It is marked, from a distance, by its wonderful peak, the Puy de Dôme, which those of us who belong to Central France see beginning to emerge beyond our vast granite plateaux. The spirit of ancient Gaul left its mark upon Pascal's character.

---

[1] For the particulars that follow, see the *Vie de M. Paschal escrite par Madame Périer sa sœur*, I, pp. 50-114 (printed from the first MS. edition), and Brunschvicg, pp. 2-40 (from the text which appeared at Amsterdam in 1684). cf. *Mémoire sur la vie de M. Pascal écrit par Mlle Marguerite Périer sa nièce* (I, pp 125-136), and the biography of Pascal inserted in the *Recueil de plusieurs pièces pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal*, etc., Utrecht, 1740 (very probably based for the most part on the manuscripts of Père Guerrier of the Oratoire, Pascal's great-great-nephew). Since the destruction of Marguerite Périer's papers these, after Mme Périer's account, continue to be the essential source of Pascal's biography. They have been largely drawn upon by Bossut, and then by Faugère (I, 111, xvi). cf. Giraud, *op. cit.* pp. 262-266, and Strowski.

[2] The *Cour des Aides* dealt with all matters relating to indirect taxation (Translator).

Between his first and second birthdays, an extraordinary thing happened to the child. He fell, says his niece Marguerite Périer, into a kind of languor, accompanied by two strange circumstances. He could not endure the sight of water, or the near neighbourhood of his parents when they approached him together. This strange illness lasted for a year, and it was thought that he was doomed to die. However, it was reported that the malady was due to a "spell" cast upon him by a poor woman to whom Mme. Pascal had given financial aid. Étienne Pascal had her sent for, obliged her to confess her crime and transfer the evil spell to a black cat, which died at once; then a poultice made of nine leaves from three different herbs gathered before sunrise by a seven-year-old child was applied to the baby, and shortly afterwards he was entirely cured. All this cannot fail to appear very strange to us, but it is to be remarked that Pascal, if from his infancy he showed signs of a malady that was possibly hereditary, never at any time manifested any sign of mental derangement, excitement, or superstition.[1] No man was more entirely reasonable than this great detractor of reason: "Superstition, lust. . . Natural vice, like unbelief, and just as pernicious" (*262*, *254*).

A much more remarkable feature in all respects was his extraordinary mental precocity. "As soon as my brother was old enough to understand anything said to him," said his sister Mme. Périer (I, 50) "he showed signs of most unusual intelligence," by his replies as well as by the questions he asked; and "these beginnings, which gave rise to high hopes, were never belied."

In 1631, President Pascal, having sold his official position, came to reside in Paris, there devoting himself entirely to the education of his children; and so it came about that Blaise never had any other teacher than his father. He was a highly-educated man, a clever mathematician, and as "affectionate" as he was "intellectual." He applied to his son's training "an unusual method and even more than paternal" care, by teaching him "the happy mean and the perfect moderation" which "does not allow of decision save for self-evident matters, and forbids the assertion or the denial of those which are not so."[1] If, for example, it were a case of the rules of grammar, he applied himself to making the boy see the reasons for them, the principles, order and significance underlying them, and he proceeded in the same way when explaining the laws of nature to him. "His chief aim was to keep his child always in advance of his work," so that he might be able to seek for himself and grasp thoroughly what was to be taught him.

---

[1] Pascal was an invalid and, to some extent, abnormal from the physiological point of view (as was seen from the post-mortem held after his death, I, 136; 40), but he was never in any sense an insane person. A doctor has thus correctly defined him: cerebral, very highly-strung, *but well-balanced*. Whatever may have been the origin of this intensity of cerebral tension is very difficult to determine, but it is certain that it contributed towards quickening *all* his faculties, yet without any trace of the disproportion or lack of balance which constitutes madness. No mind was healthier or better balanced than his.

The seed thus sown, moreover, fell into ground marvellously well-adapted to receive it. A friend of the Pascal family, Domat, King's Counsel at the Civil Tribunal of Clermont, the author of the admirable treatise *Des lois civiles dans leur ordre natural*, has left us a very fine portrait in red chalk of Blaise Pascal as a child.[2] The thing that strikes us in this face with its peculiarly refined features is not so much the large nose and the high forehead as the unusually penetrating glance of the large, widely-opened eyes looking straight in front of them, seeming to go to the very heart of things and rediscover them for themselves. He wanted, as his sister tells us, "to know the reason for everything." He was not satisfied with evasions or incomplete explanations, he gave in only "to that which appeared to him evidently true, so that if no good reasons were given he sought them for himself, and when he had applied himself to anything, he did not give it up until he found a reason able to satisfy him" (I, 52; 4). Thus, having once noticed that the striking of a china dish with a knife made a loud sound, which stopped immediately a hand was laid on the dish, he was not content until he had sought and found the reason of it; this he did after a large number of experiments, which led him to compose a treatise on sounds. It was his first work; he was eleven years old at the time.

---

[1] Letter to M. Le Pailleur, 1648, II, 210. Upon the training which Pascal received from his father, Mme. Périer's memoir should be consulted; I, 50-52; 3-4.

[2] It is to be found reproduced as a frontispiece to Boutroux' *Pascal*. On likenesses of Pascal, a note by E. Jovy, *Pascal inédit*, p. 426, should be studied. The volumes published by the *Société des sciences et arts de Vitry-le-François* in 1906, 1908, and 1911, prove an inexhaustible mine of documentary information relating to Pascal, especially with reference to his theological writings.

His father had decided that he must know Latin and Greek well before he taught him mathematics, and therefore had confined himself to telling him in general terms that it was a science which examined into the proportions between various figures and the way to make them infallibly exact. This simple preliminary was enough to set young Pascal's mind to work, and thus it came about that in using a burnt stick to make circles and lines he ended by discovering geometry and demonstrating to himself the thirty-second proposition of the first book of Euclid, namely that the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles.[1] His father was astounded at such mental precocity, and from that time supplied his son with all the books and all the explanations he asked him for, being anxious to give him a *method* and a *sound understanding* rather than complete and didactic information.

Let us remember all these traits, for they characterize Pascal's genius and account for the incomparable power of his work, both scientific and religious. Pascal, differing in this from Descartes, is of a realistic, intuitive and concrete mind, which proceeds direct to facts, to physical experiment or to history, and does not stop until it has discovered the reason for certain effects. There is in him nothing of the abstract or deductive thinker; he does not endeavour to reconstruct the universe to make it square with concepts or theories: he is content to observe it, and account for it rationally, the proper rôle of reason being to submit to facts, not to make facts submit to reason. But he observes it "to the full," and he immediately perceives order in it.[1] "M. Pascal, having gone to visit M. Arnoul at Saint-Victor with the Duc de Roannez, noticed a flock of sheep entering a field in a confused mass; he asked M. Arnoul if he could make a guess at their number. The latter having replied in the negative, he told him at once, counting on his fingers, that there were four hundred. M. de Roannez asked the shepherd in charge of them how many there were, and he replied: four hundred."

---

[1] Such is Mme Périer's account (I, 53-56; 4-6). Tallemant des Réaux in his *Historiettes*, gives a different version, which Brunschvicg (I, 55, note) adopts, whereby Pascal, from his twelfth year, read Euclid secretly, the first book in one afternoon, and the others in a proportionately shorter time, and made up propositions on what he had read. This account is more probable, though Mme. Périer's version is not impossible, and may well be true. cf. Montucla, *Histoire des mathématiques*, Vol. II, p. 61. It has been maintained that such a feat exceeds the power of the human mind; in any case it does not surpass Pascal's genius, and we have no serious reason to cast a doubt upon it. True comprehension *is* discovery; now Pascal, whether he is inventing or whether he is following others, *discovers*, in the full sense of the term, all that he *comprehends*.

The development of these unusual gifts had in it nothing troubled or constrained; on the contrary it was stimulated by the environment in which Pascal lived. From this time we shall see him being initiated into the social, scientific, and religious life of his period, and receiving from it a definite impulse.

The circle frequented by his father was a circle of gentlemen accustomed to good breeding, strongly inclined, moreover, to gambling and to social diversions, like his friend Le Pailleur. "We cannot think of Plato and Aristotle, save in their professorial robes. They were well-bred men, laughing with their friends, like others, and when they amused themselves with writing their Laws and their Politics, they did it as a pastime. It was the least philosophic and the least serious part of their life, and the most philosophic was to live simply and quietly" (*331*). Happily for young Pascal, home life completed and perfected his education in good taste by the education of the heart. Although deprived of a mother's care and solicitude, which nothing can replace, Pascal knew the peace and joy of intimate family life, for his father, his sisters and he were bound together in the closest ties.[1] Above all he had "a special love" for his sister Jacqueline, a love amply deserved by a child who was "perfectly beautiful, and possessed of the sweetest and most pleasing disposition."[2] From the age of thirteen she had charmed the Court by her acuteness and her precocious gift for rhyming, which the great Corneille encouraged in her, and at twenty-one years old she resolved to devote her life to God by an act of entire renunciation, which was greatly enhanced by the brilliance of her talents. Upon her brother Jacqueline exercised a profound, penetrating, and permanent influence; there was between them that secret harmony of soul which more than once has closely united a brother who is a genius and a sister of incomparable spirituality.

---

[1] *I, 269.* The anecdote which follows (Ste-Beuve, *op. cit.* II, p. 501; Brunschvicg, p. 41) is not absolutely certain, but like the story of Newton's apple, it is eminently significant and "fitting."

From this time, too, Pascal found himself taking a part in the scientific movement of his day. In his father's house, and at Mersenne's home, he met the most celebrated mathematicians of the age—Roberval, Carcavi, Mydorge, Desargues from Lyons, Gassendi; he entered into correspondence with another friend of his father's, Fermat of Toulouse, possibly the greatest mathematical genius that France ever produced. In this circle, which was on the watch for all the new scientific ideas, and sifted them thoroughly, Pascal underwent his apprenticeship to an art of which he was soon to become a master. He was initiated into "that wonderful science," geometry (IX, 255; 173) and, in addition, into the sciences which owe their existence to the union of geometry with physics. These were sure to please his intuitive mind, anxious as he was above all things to rely upon concrete reality and seek there the *truth* which formed the object of his quest.[1]

---

[1] Later he became tenderly attached to his nephew, Étienne Périer (Strowski, II, p. 49).

[2] *Vie de Jacqueline Pascal*, by Mme Périer (I, 143, 153). cf. Victor Cousin, *Jacqueline Pascal*, Paris, 1845, and Giraud, *op. cit.* p. 213 *et seq.*

Lastly, from his father he received a very sound, if not a very fervent, Christian training, which, added to his ardent taste for science entirely preserved him, as Gilberte Périer tells us, from free-thought and from laxity in morals. From his childhood his father had inspired in him "a very great respect for religion," "laying it down as a maxim that what is the subject of faith cannot be that of reason," so that Pascal, although he was very young, was never affected by the talk of the free-thinkers, but on the contrary clearly discerned the "false principle," namely, "that human reason is superior to all things. . . Thus this great mind, so lofty and so inquiring, which sought the origin and the reason of everything so carefully, was at the same time as submissive as a child in all religious matters" (I, 59-60; 11).

Thus Pascal's genius unfolded itself in all directions. At fifteen, his personality was already formed. He needed one thing more—the full consciousness of his mission; and that was to be revealed to him during the night of November 23rd, 1654. It was to make his life a complete whole.

At this time it was science that attracted and retained his interest to the exclusion of everything else. Already in 1639, when he was scarcely sixteen, he conceived and produced an Essay on conic sections, which, printed in pamphlet form in 1640 (I,245), placed him in the forefront of the scientists of his time. "It was said that such proficiency had not been known since the days of Archimedes," and that this stripling "was head and shoulders above all who had previously treated the subject."[2] Descartes alone remained, or pretended to remain, indifferent to this work, which was inspired by Desargues' projective geometry, and which, by substituting a synthetic and concrete view of the object studied for a general and abstract analysis, showed in its very principle the opposition of the two minds and two methods. Pascal's originality was clearly evident. Taking, like Desargues, perspective for his starting-point, and endeavouring like him to reduce to a small number of propositions the properties of conic sections, considered as various perspectives of the circle, he had carried much further than his master the applications of a method of which the latter, according to Pascal's own words, was "the original inventor," and he had discovered the well-known lemma which bears the name of *Pascal's theorem*, in which all the properties of conics and those that can be deduced from them are comprised.[1] "After

---

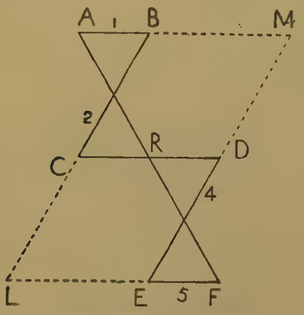
[1] . . . "he was always admirably clear-sighted in discerning the falsity of an argument," says Mme Périer (I, 52; 4); "and one may say that always and in all things the truth was the sole object of his thought, for nothing but the knowledge of it could ever satisfy him."

[2] The first is Mme Périer's expression (1,57; 8), the second, Father Mersenne's. cf. Descartes's answer to Mersenne's letter of Nov. 12, 1639, announcing the despatch of Pascal's pamphlet: "I do not think it strange that there

---

should be people who demonstrate conics more easily than Apollonius . . . but one could suggest many other things dealing with conics that a child of sixteen would find it hard to unravel," and what he says in his letter of Apr. 1, 1640: "I had not read half of it before I saw that he had taken his ideas from M. Des-Argues, and this was confirmed shortly afterwards by his own confession." Adam-Tannery, III 47, and note.

[1] According to this lemma (I, 253), the hexagon inscribed in a conic section has the property that the points of intersection of the three pairs of opposite sides are collinear. In his treatise on conic sections (which Leibniz must have known) Pascal called this inscribed hexagon the mystic hexagram. He showed "by means of projections that every mystic hexagram belongs to a conic section and that every conic section yields a mystic hexagram" (II, 221), and following Mersenne's expression, from this single proposition which is quite general (called by Desargues *la Pascale*) he deduced in four hundred corollaries all the properties of conics. Pascal's papers relating to conics, which Leibniz saw, and of which he gave a summary in his letter of Aug. 30, 1676 to Étienne Périer (II, 220-224), are missing to-day, except a single one, *Generatio conisectionum*, (II, 234), which was completed in 1648, and of which a copy was preserved for us by Leibniz, an ardent enthusiast for all that concerned Pascal.



*Pascal's mystic hexagram* (from Leibniz' diagram, II, 232). Pascal's calls the sides 1 and 4 opposite to 2 and 5. The three points of intersection L, R, M, are collinear.

which," he concluded, "if it be thought that the matter deserves to be continued, we shall endeavour to carry it as far as God gives us the power to extend it" (I,260).

This was something surprising. This first discovery of Pascal's already bore his own stamp of genius and contained the germ of his entire method of comprehending mathematics. It rests, in fact, upon the conception that "the properties of a complex figure may be considered as modifications and resemblances of a more simple figure"[1]—in this case the circle seen in perspective in three dimensions. Now here we find once more the Platonic idea of participation, according to which all things in nature are an image or an imitation of ideas; and from it we gain an inkling of the Pascalian doctrine of orders, which sees in true art an imitation of a natural model, of greater beauty and charm, and in the world of morals the imitation of a supernatural model, God, and in a more general way, in Nature a symbol, or a distorted image, of grace.

In 1639 Étienne Pascal, who had at one time been in disgrace with Richelieu, to whose favour he was afterwards restored through Jacqueline's intervention, was sent by order of the Cardinal to Rouen, as His Majesty's Intendant and Commissary in Upper Normandy. He took his children with him, and until 1648 the family lived at Rouen. There Étienne Pascal's circle was of the same kind as in Paris, and the great Corneille frequented his house. He acquitted himself so well in his duties and raised so many "grievous taxes" that he incited a revolt among the rabble, which was put down with a high hand and severely punished. What impression was left upon young Pascal's mind by this incident? We have no means of knowing, but possibly it aroused in him (together with that hatred of civil war, which he held, as he tells us in the *Pensées 313* and *320*, to be the worst of evils), those profound reflections upon the basis of power and the social order, which he has left us. To Pascal their surest guarantee is the weakness or folly of the populace, which is persuaded that custom is to be venerated, that right is the order already established, that high birth confers a claim to respect, and the folly of the prince, which the sages merely try to modify as much as possible: "When they wrote on politics, it is as if they were laying down regulations for a madhouse" (*331*).

---

[1] Ravaisson, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, March 15th, 1887, p. 414.

In his task of comparing and assessing taxes Étienne was compelled to make long and complicated calculations. It was in order to help him that Blaise conceived the idea of a mechanical system of computation, which would be quicker and more certain than the methods in use, such as counters or the pen, and also more complete than Napier's calculating apparatus (Napier's Bones) which still demanded mental effort for the figures carried over. It was in 1642, apparently, when he was nineteen years old, that Blaise Pascal designed his mechanical computer, but the execution of his design cost him nearly ten years' research, attempts and tests, which were not without serious effects upon his health, from that time always uncertain. To make his design a success he had to couple mathematical training with disciplined exactitude, become an engineer, builder, even labourer; he attempted, he tells us (I, 313), more than fifty models, and encountered difficulties of all sorts, failures, discouragement, infringements and counterfeits. Finally on 22nd May, 1649, he obtained from Séguier the Chancellor a patent which secured him the glory and the profits of his invention,[1] and in 1652 he settled upon the final model of his arithmetical machine, which is still to be seen in the National Museum of Arts and Crafts in Paris. This invention set the seal on Pascal's scientific repute and excited general admiration.

His computer is the first adding-machine ever invented, and the one that inspired all the inventors coming after him. It is of still greater interest for other reasons, from its origin and its aim, which Pascal indicated very clearly in his dedicatory epistle to the Chancellor, 1645, and in the announcement which followed it (I, 298, 303). His aim was to relieve the mind of work that fatigued it, to free the person who operated it from any sustained effort of attention and memory, to attain results with celerity and certitude, it is the very principle of Taylorism: to economize the time and spare the fatigue of the operator by supplying him with a machine that was sensibly set up (I, 303; 307-8). This aim, moreover, was attained by combining "intelligence gained from geometry, physics and mechanics" (I, 299), by "the legitimate and necessary co-operation of theory with art" (I, 312), and by conforming to an order, not linear, abstract and logical, but complex, concrete and rational, the infinitely valuable significance of which he had acquired by means of a series of subtle adaptations only to be explained orally, not in writing; its *use* being, as he said, much clearer than any *written lecture* upon it (I, 304, 308).

---

[1] III, 401. There is no doubt that Pascal had an idea of profiting by his invention and making a business out of calculating machines. On this subject Strowski cites (II, p. 394) a quaint testimony afforded by Father Jean-François in 1653, to the effect that "the Pascalian wheel" was an object of actual trade; it was sold for a hundred pounds, but the expense of the instrument and the risk of some wheel being wanting and irreplaceable made it very rare.

Thus this geometer, probing to the depths of geometry as in all other matters, discovered the infinite complexity of the real, and already discerned beneath the geometrical spirit (*l'esprit de géométrie*), a yet more delicate, and also more fundamental spirit, the intuitive spirit (*l'esprit de finesse*) or the heart, which grasps the principles at the base of all our reasoning.

Viewed in this light, the year 1646 marks a decisive date in Pascal's life. Through two circumstances which appear accidental it is the beginning of a new epoch. In that year, in fact, as a consequence of a fall of Étienne's on the ice, the Pascal family came in contact with Port Royal, and what has been called Pascal's "first conversion" took place. On the other hand the arrival of Pierre Petit in Rouen, and the realization of the first experiment on the vacuum, determined Pascal's vocation as a physicist, and made of him the creator of modern methods of experiment and of hydrostatics. Henceforward, in Pascal's life there were two currents alternating or uniting during a number of years. We shall follow the course of each separately, fixing our attention first upon the scientific one.[1]

In the seventeenth century the problem of the vacuum was of supreme importance, from the point of view both of physics and of metaphysics. As a rule the philosophers denied the existence of the vacuum, which they likened to nothingness; it was an accepted principle in the schools, in accordance with Aristotle's *Physics*, that nature abhors a vacuum, and can in no case support it, or else that in any case if the vacuum be not a contradiction in terms, it is unrealizable. Descartes went so far as to declare it inconceivable; as for the Atomic theorists, while admitting the intermolecular vacuum, they consider a perceptible vacuum unrealizable. Upon this point, therefore, all the theories were agreed.

In 1644, however, Torricelli, substituting experiment for theory, had proved that there was a vacuum in the barometric tube. In order to reply to the question, propounded to Galileo by the Florence turncocks, whether it was impossible for a suction-pump to raise water higher than thirty-two feet, Torricelli reversed a four-foot tube of mercury in a basin filled half with mercury and half with water, and ascertained that if the tube is unstopped the mercury is lowered, leaving in the upper part of the tube an apparently empty space, and then, if the tube is raised so that its orifice reaches the level of the water, the latter rushes into the free space, proving that it was a vacuum, and not filled with air.[1] This was the problem set, the initial fact to be taken into account. Many thinkers already, Jean Rey, Descartes, Beeckman, and Torricelli himself, had an inkling of its cause, which is the air-pressure exerted by the external fluid.

---

[1] In what follows, I shall not try to refute the allegations of M. Mathieu, who endeavoured to prove Pascal a *plagiarist* who copied Azout's experiment, and a *forger* of the letter of Nov. 15, 1647. The sole advantage of the controversy has been to bring to light fresh proofs of Pascal's good faith and of his originality, not diminished by the fact that his invention, like most scientific inventions, "is by no means the spontaneous issue of one isolated, autonomous intellect," as Father Duhem, in defending him, justly remarks.

Torricelli's experiment, directly it was known to Michel Angelo Ricci, and then to Father Mersenne, who immediately published it abroad in France, excited lively curiosity throughout the entire scientific world. But there remained the task of reproducing it, of *establishing* the fact in such a way as to convince its opponents, and of *interpreting* it, by connecting it, not with a mere mental conjecture, but with demonstrable principles which confer upon it its full and precise significance. This was precisely what Pascal did, and from this double point of view he deserves to be considered a creator.[2]

1. *Pascal establishes the fact.*—A friend of Étienne Pascal's, a young man with a great gift for mathematics, and particularly enthusiastic about matters in which knowledge depended upon experiment,[3] Pierre Petit of Montluçon, inspector of fortifications, on his way through Rouen succeeded, with the help of the two Pascals, in reproducing the Torricelli experiment of which he had heard from Mersenne.[4] But the younger Pascal was still not satisfied; his clear-sighted and scrupulous mind realized that this experiment was not a decisive one, that the opponents of the vacuum theory might still argue that the upper part of the tube was full of spirits of mercury, or rarefied air or some other subtle matter. In order that the theory might not rest upon mere words, Blaise resolved to make a large

---

[1] This is the reason why Pascal, after having done full justice to Torricelli, could legitimately write to M. de Ribeyre (II, 494): "It is true, sir, and I tell you so boldly, that this experiment (the great experiment of the Puy de Dôme) was my invention, and moreover I can say that the new knowledge it has discovered to us is also wholly mine."

[2] *Expériences nouvelles touchant le vide,* (II, 56-7); letter to M. de Ribeyre, July 12th, 1651 (II, 484).

[3] Baillet, *Vie de M. Des-Cartes,* 1691, I, p. 326.

[4] *Vide* Petit's letter to Chanut of Nov. 26, 1646 (I, 331).

number of experiments so convincing as to be proof against all possible objections.[1] For this purpose he made use of retorts, tubes, syringes, blowpipes, etc., of various shapes and sizes, and even invented a new piece of apparatus, the famous "Pascal syringe," consisting of a long glass tube with a little opening that can be closed with the finger, and a very narrow piston. This was the first pneumatic tube (II, 63). He used different fluids, such as quicksilver, water, wine, oil, air, etc. Then, at the cost of money, time, and trouble, he repeated his experiments, varied them in every possible way, filling his retorts with different fluids, plunging them into different fluids in various ways, and changing them from one to another.[2] He demonstrated also that whatever may be the diameter and the shape of the tube, and its inclination, the quicksilver in every case mounts to a height of two feet three inches (which corresponds with a height of thirty-two feet for water), a proof that the presumed presence of rarefied air or subtle matter, even admitting that it exists, does not in any way affect the fact. Finally, he showed in a more general way that a vessel, however large it be made, may be rendered void of all the matters known in Nature. And he concluded: "After having demonstrated that none of the matters perceptible to our senses and of which we know anything, apparently fill this empty space, my opinion is that, until someone has shown me the existence of some matter that does fill it, it is a veritable vacuum, destitute of all matter whatsoever" (II, 73).

This is a very noteworthy conclusion, for no theory, whether physical or metaphysical, can hold out against experience; no mental conception is of value compared with the fact. Here was Pascal in possession of his principle, which is indeed the principle of truth in every kind of knowledge; we shall see how infinitely fertile it is.

---

[1] "All who aimed at doing away with the vacuum vied with each other in that mental quality called subtlety in the Schools, which offers but empty words without foundations when it wants to solve real difficulties. I accordingly resolved to make experiments so convincing that they could stand the test of any objections that might be made" (*Expériences nouvelles*, II, 59-60).

[2] II, 63 *et seq.* From Roberval's *Narration* (II, 28 *et seq.*) we know that Pascal had two large tubes made, forty feet high, and filled them with wine and water respectively. The opposition party said that the wine, being more subtle, and emitting more vapour, would mount higher in the tube, but Pascal proved that it was the contrary that occurred.

It is noteworthy, too, how very careful Pascal was never to go beyond experience, and to deduce nothing more than the consequences which the experiment permitted. When obliged to give his opponents, or his emulators,[1] a summary of his experiments, he did it in a treatise which appeared in October 1647, *Expériences nouvelles touchant le vide;* and although he apparently at that time possessed the clue to the enigma, since he knew nothing absolutely certain on the matter, and his experiments had taught him nothing about the force upholding the quicksilver in the barometric tube, he did not mention it. He started from Galileo's hypothesis that nature abhors a vacuum, but brought it into line with facts—in other words, he treated this "abhorrence of the vacuum" as an effect, not a cause, and proved from facts that it is limited, being no greater for an apparently large vacuum than for a small one, and that the suspension of the mercury or the water is unvarying in height for each of them, and absolutely independent of the empty space. He thus concluded that there is an *absolute vacuum.* Whatever might be the developments in his experiments and in the science, there was (as Bertrand in his book, *Blaise Pascal,* expressly notes) not a single word to retract. All that Pascal had said on this subject was clear-cut and decisive, the enviable prerogative of one who never advances more than he actually knows. All Pascal's teaching may be thus summed up, and this quality suffices to guarantee the significance of his work and make it really immortal.

2. *Pascal defends his experiments and sets forth their method.*—Pascal had established the reality of the vacuum as an actual fact; he now had to defend it against the objections and

---

[1] Notably Father Valerian Magni, a Polish Capuchin (II, 16). cf. the letter to Ribeyre, July 12, 1651 (II, 490) and Strowski's remarks on Pascal's chronological errors (II, p. 390).

prejudices of the theorists, and to make known the essential principles that had guided him in his research.

His most inveterate dissentient, Father Noël, a Jesuit, had replied to Pascal's treatise (October 1647), relying both on Aristotle and Descartes to demonstrate that this apparent vacuum, having all the motions of a body, *is* a body, and that the vacuum, moreover, being nothingness, is inconceivable. Pascal's reply (II, 90) is noteworthy. First of all he proclaimed this "general rule": We can only affirm as a decisive opinion that which appears so evident and clear to our senses or our reason that we cannot doubt its certainty; such opinions are *principles*. Or else we may affirm what follows as the infallible and necessary result of such principles or axioms; these results are *consequences*. Outside these there is only imagination, caprice, fantasy, sometimes an idea, at most a fine thought; and nothing can be actually asserted without rashness as long as a clear demonstration has not persuaded us of its truth. "For the mysteries of the faith, which the Holy Spirit has Himself revealed, we reserve the submissive mind which supports our belief in mysteries hidden alike from sense and reason" (II, 92). Now what was this pretended body of which Father Noël spoke, which would fill the vacuum? Something arbitrarily presupposed and dependent on theories that were not established, as, for instance, the theory that light, the nature of which is unknown to us, cannot subsist in a vacuum—one of those things "as difficult to believe as they are easy to invent" (II, 96)—in short, a mere name. And with regard to this matter Pascal defined with absolute clarity the characteristics and significance of our hypotheses in this essential rule: "*For a hypothesis to be true it is not enough for it to accord with all known phenomena; if it be contradicted by a single one of them, it is false.*"[1] Now applying to the case in question this golden rule which, behind Father Noël, hits Descartes,[1] Pascal proved that, the height of the quicksilver in the tube being independent of the dimensions of the empty space (whereas according to Father Noël's hypothesis it ought to be much greater for a larger apparent void), the hypothesis must be rejected as false, since "one necessarily concludes from it things contrary to experience" (II, 103). If Father Noël pretended to shelter himself behind definitions, it was essential that these definitions should correspond with reality, and that he should prove it, for it is not enough for a definition to be verbally clear, for it to be true. No mental conception can replace a fact, or weigh against it (II, 185).

---

[1] "For sometimes we conclude a thing absurd through its negation, and then the hypothesis is true and unvarying; or we may infer its absurdity from its affirmation, and then the hypothesis is held to be false; and when we have not yet been able to conclude its absurdity either from its negation or from its affirmation, the hypothesis remains doubtful, so that for a hypothesis to be

Pascal had spoken. Father Noël wrote a second letter, defending his position, and then in 1648 a short treatise which he called *Le Plein du Vide*, but he maintained his thesis from the metaphysical point of view only. From the physical point of view he accepted Pascal's opinion, and finally, in his *Gravitas comparata*, recognized with him that the weight of the mercury was equivalent to the weight of the air, and that it was the weight of the air which explained the suspension of the fluids. Pascal had gained the day, and henceforward the fact was established and recognized by his

---

clearly evident it is not enough for all the phenomena that result from it to be evident; if something contrary to a single one of the phenomena occur, it suffices to prove it false. If, for instance, we find a stone that is hot without knowing the reason for its heat, the man who would be regarded as having found the reason would argue thus: Let us presuppose that this stone has been placed in a strong fire, and has not long been withdrawn; then the stone must still be hot. Now it is hot; has it therefore been put in the fire? This would imply that the fire was the sole cause of its heat; but as it may proceed from the sun, or from friction, such an argument would have no weight, for just as the same cause may produce many different effects, the same effect may proceed from different causes. Thus, when discoursing from the human point of view on the movement or stability of the earth, all the phenomena of the movements forward and backward of the planets ensue from the hypotheses of Ptolemy, Tycho, Copernicus, or many others, only a single one of which can be true. But who would dare to decide between them, and maintain one against the rest, without the risk of error?" (II, 99-101). Pascal's teaching here has lost none of its force or aptness, each generation still treating its theories as if they were conclusive.

[1] Descartes presents as *true* those hypotheses which agree with all the facts known, so that one may draw deductions from them; (*Descartes*, p. 146); Pascal shows them to be merely *probable*.

opponents themselves. His experiments attracted the attention of all the scientists of Europe. Pecquet and Gassendi quoted them admiringly; in England Boyle's development of the principle of the air-pump was due to "the very ingenious Pascal." Thus the way was opened to the truth. The fact being now established, it remained to interpret it, that is, to discover and demonstrate its cause.

3. *The search for the cause.*—The cause was discovered through the great experiment upon *the equilibrium of fluids.* Pascal did indeed suspect with Torricelli that the cause of the effects discovered is not the "abhorrence of the vacuum"; that is, one of those imaginary causes "expressed in specious terms that fill the ear and not the mind," which moreover "prove but a vain relief to man's anxiety to penetrate hidden truths, and, far from discovering them, serve only to mask the ignorance of those who invent them, and to feed that of their adherents." He suspected that the real cause is the weight and the pressure of the air which is balanced by the column of fluid. But to decide between two hypotheses and present his own as a certainty, he needed "convincing proofs." Pascal conceived of two, one by the method of difference, the other by the method of variation, and he carried them out with absolute precision, thus at one stroke and decisively putting physical science in possession of its principles and its method.

The first proof, by the method of difference, was that of the void within the void.[1] Putting one tube within another, Pascal showed by an ingenious arrangement that the mercury in the inner tube remains suspended at the usual height as long as it is counterbalanced by the weight of the entire mass of air, but that it falls completely when, a vacuum having been created in the larger tube, it is no longer compressed or counterbalanced by any air. Do away with the pressure, and there is no suspension; therefore the pressure causes the suspension of the fluid. Nevertheless, with his customary "caution," Pascal observed that this experiment was not conclusive, because the effects so naturally explained by the pressure might still be explained quite possibly by Nature's abhorrence of the vacuum (II,159).

---

[1] Pascal describes it in a letter to M. Périer (Nov. 15, 1647). It was indeed Pascal who conceived and carried it out, although it was completed by Roberval and Rohault. Father Noël's testimony on this point is explicit.

He then thought out a second test, "to decide the question", one which of itself would suffice to give us the information we need. "This is to undertake the ordinary experiment with the vacuum several times in the same day, with the same quicksilver, sometimes at the base and sometimes at the summit of some hill at least about five or six hundred *toises*[1] high, to see whether the height of the quicksilver suspended in the tube will be the same in both positions or whether they will differ. . . If it should happen that the height of the quicksilver is less at the top of the hill than at the bottom (as I have reason to believe, although all the others who have reflected on this matter disagree with me),[2] it will necessarily follow that the weight and pressure of the air are the sole cause of this suspension of the quicksilver and not the abhorrence of the vacuum, since it is indeed certain that there must be a greater pressure of air at the foot of a hill than at the top, unless one is obliged to admit that nature abhors a vacuum more at the base than at the summit of the hill" (II, 159-60; 70-1). In other words, if, while all the other circumstances remain the same, we vary the pressure, and the height varies proportionately, then the pressure is the cause of the phenomenon.[3]

Descartes claimed for himself the merit of having conceived this experiment;[4] he is said to have suggested it to

[1] 3,000 to 3,500 ft.

[2] Notably Mersenne, Roberval, and the disciples of Galileo and of Aristotle.

[3] For this reason Robert Boyle, using an expression of Bacon's, aptly defines Pascal's experiment as *experimentum crucis* (*Defensio doctrinæ de Elatere et gravitate aeris*, p. 38 (London, 1663).

[4] Letters of Dec. 13, 1647, to Mersenne, and of June 11 and Aug. 17, to Carcavi. After having mentioned the *Expériences nouvelles* which Pascal had had sent him, Descartes writes: "In it he seems to desire to dispute my 'subtle matter,' and I am much obliged to him for it; but I beg him not to forget to bring all his best reasons to bear on this subject and not to take it ill if at the

Pascal in the course of the visits he paid him on the 23rd and 24th of September, 1647. Whatever the fact may be, the experiment has to Pascal quite another significance than to Descartes. If on his side Descartes conceived it, it was by making it fit in to a *system*, and one wholly different from Pascal's views of physics. With Pascal, the experiment arises out of his long intellectual travail upon *facts;* it is from this that it proceeds, and not from a chance word that has been uttered.[1] The great experiment indeed belongs to Pascal; it was his genius that conceived it; all his contemporaries—Pecquet, Gassendi, Boyle, Auzout himself, proclaim the fact aloud.

In any case, "as great matters are usually attended with difficulty," Pascal's project could not be executed until ten months later. At last, on the 19th of September, 1648, Périer, until that time detained by his official duties in Bourbonnais, succeeded in making the experiment on the Puy de Dôme, in conformity with the very precise instructions Pascal had given him in his letter of 15th November, 1647. The latter repeated and verified it on the tower of St. James's church, and then in a private house. Just as he had clearly foreseen, all the results concur in establishing the fact that the height of the column of mercury is lowered in proportion as the experimenter ascends—that is, as the pressure of air diminishes, the column of mercury equalizes

---

right time and place I should explain all that I think pertinent to the matter for my own defence." Of the experiment of the Puy de Dôme he asserts: "It was I who begged him, two years ago, to undertake it, and I was certain it would be a success, because it was wholly in agreement with my principles, and without this he would not have thought about doing it, since he held a contrary opinion." On this point, cf. I, xxiv *et seq.*; Ch. Adam's articles on "Pascal and Descartes" in the *Revue philosophique*, Dec. 1887, and Jan. 1888; and Strowski, II, 156-171. In fact, as Duhem has shown, the first written document in which the experiment is found proposed or at any rate, sketched out, is Father Mersenne's book, which appeared in Oct., 1647, entitled *Reflectiones physico-mathematicæ*. It is true that Mersenne calls the success of the experiment in question and even, like Roberval, invalidates its results beforehand (II, 149-152).

[1] Note the way in which, in his letter to Périer (II, 153-5; 68-9) he retraces the successive steps in his own thought.

things.[1] It was a striking confirmation of Pascal's views. In October 1648 he hastily printed an account of the experiment pointing out its significance and its applications to matters which concern not only the principles and methods of physics, but also the determining of altitudes, the corrections of thermometers and the weather forecast.

4. *Establishing the general principle.*—The experiments, which "have much more persuasive power than reasoning," and were "our real leaders in physics,"[2] had thus established clearly and indisputably the reality of the vacuum, and the existence of air-pressure as the true and unique cause of all the effects observable. Pascal was now able to conclude and boldly formulate the *general principle* which accounts for the facts and the laws, for "in writing a book the last thing we decide is what we shall put in it first" (*19*).

He had already indicated this principle in his letter to his brother-in-law, when he said: "I am inclined to impute all these results to the weight and pressure of the air, because I consider them only as particular cases of the general proposition respecting the equilibrium of fluids" (II, 154). After having perceived the facts and their causes, Pascal formulated a general law, the final step in science, or, to put it more exactly, he discerned the general in the particular. In his two admirable treatises on the *Pesanteur de la masse de l'air* and on *L'équilibre des liqueurs* (which, though written before 1654 were not published till 1663), Pascal, connecting the first phenomena with the second, showed that the equilibrium of a vaporous mass with a fluid column is only a particular case of the equilibrium of two fluids in communicating vessels. He was thus led to formulate the fundamental principle of *hydrostatics*, which explains and co-ordinates all the scattered researches and discoveries of Stevin, Galileo, Torricelli, Mersenne and Descartes.

---

[1] *Récit de la grande expérience de l'équilibre des liqueurs* (II, 365, *et seq.*) and Périer's account of it in his letter to Pascal (II, 351 *et seq.*). At Pascal's request other observations were made in 1649 and 1650 by Périer at Clermont and Chanut in Sweden, and it is interesting to note that until the eve of his death Descartes associated himself with these—a fact which reduces to its true proportions the disagreement between the two great minds.

[2] III, pp. 199, 266.

First of all he established (*Traité de l'équilibre des liqueurs*, Ch. I) the fact that fluids weigh in proportion to their height and that alone, so that the force exerted upon an aperture, for instance, is regulated by the weight of a column, the height of which is the vertical height of the fluid, and its base the width of the aperture, whatever may be the weight of the entire mass or its width or position. Directly afterwards (Ch. II) he deduced the following consequence, which gives the theory of balances and of the multiplication of force—namely, that if a vessel be filled with water, closed everywhere save for two apertures, the one one-hundredth part of the other in area, and each of these apertures be provided with a tight-fitting piston, one man working the little piston will be equal to a hundred men working the large one, and his force will overcome the force of the ninety-nine others. From this he concluded that by reason of the continuity and the fluidity of the liquid "a vessel full of water is a new principle of mechanics and a new instrument for multiplying force to whatever degree be desired, since by this means a man can raise any weight suggested" (III, 163; 169-70). This is the principle of the *hydraulic press*, whose universal application Pascal at once realized. He went further still, and connected the laws of the equilibrium of fluids with those of mechanics generally, demonstrating that the statics of fluids and the statics of gases form part of one and the same science,[1] constructed in a rational method upon experiments, "which alone are the working principles of physics" (II, 511; 78). If to this we add that the art of making a vacuum, discovered by Pascal, controls the art of rarefying and condensing gases through changes in pressure or in temperature, we shall be able to estimate the immense impulse given to theoretical and practical physics by Pascal's synthetic yet practical genius.

---

[1] This is what Pascal must have expounded in his *Traité de mécanique*, now unfortunately lost to us.

5. *Philosophical conclusions.*—His intuition, moreover, like every intuition that touches the foundations of reality, extended far beyond its point of application.

On the one hand, indeed, the conception of *equilibrium* impressed itself upon his mind in such a way as to dominate the orientation of his thought in the most remote domains.[1]

On the other hand, for the Peripatetic and qualitative conception of the physical world Pascal substituted an entirely different view, a geometric view, in some respects closely approaching the Cartesian mechanism which he so much admired,[2] yet more concrete, more cautious, too, and more rigid in its details. This view, when it had been enriched by his mathematical discoveries, finally became the bold and fruitful conception of *a general relativity in the physical world*, like that formulated in the *Esprit géométrique* (IX, 255: 173). "These three things which comprise the whole universe (movement, number, space), according to these words: *Deus fecit omnia in pondere, in numero et mensura*, have a reciprocal and necessary connection. For we cannot imagine movement without something that moves, and this thing being one, this unit is the origin of all numbers; and since movement cannot take place without space, we see that these three things are included in the first. Time is also comprised therein, for movement and time relate to one another; speed and sluggishness, which are the varieties of movement, being necessarily in relation with time."[3]

---

[1] Those who know how close and subtle are the connections between an author's philosophical ideas and his scientific discoveries will not find it difficult to believe that the idea of physical equilibrium discovered by Pascal was not without influence upon his conception of the truth, the mean between two extremes, the balance between two opposing forces.

[2] Baillet, *op. cit.* I, p. 52.

[3] In the text there follows the enunciation of "properties common to all things", of which "the chief includes the two infinites to be found in them all: the infinitely great and the infinitely little". It is moreover to be remarked that in this enunciation which, by an intuition of the concrete image of the world, sums up and completes the notion of the general relativity of principles and of their union at the heart of movement, Pascal is careful not to confound, as modern idealists confound, the *fact* with *our way of representing it to ourselves*, *time* with the *system of reckoning time*, for this complex principle, the universe, in which the moderns, displacing the Absolute, make it into an absolute itself, is differently viewed by Pascal. After having realized it as an "effect of nature"

Finally, from this period Pascal completed and perfected his work by setting out, in definite terms, the philosophy of physical experiment and discovery, and the conditions of human progress. In his brief preface to a *Traité du Vide*,[1] he clearly distinguished between two kinds of knowledge: knowledge whose source is the simple fact, or a Divine or human institution which relies upon the authority of the evidence, such as history or theology; and knowledge whose subject comes under judgment or reasoning, like physics or mathematics; here authority is of no avail, and reason alone operates in obtaining it. From this it follows that such knowledge must be increased and augmented if it is to become perfect. Like reason itself, of which it is the fruit, it must extend and increase continually; we must not imitate the ancients except so far as we try to surpass them, as they themselves surpassed their predecessors. This is, in fact, man's prerogative. While an animal is instinctively riveted to a limited and unvarying knowledge (for bees made their hives just in the same way a thousand years ago as to-day), "it is not the same with man, who is created only for infinity. . . . So that all the succession of men, throughout the course of so many centuries, must be considered as the same man who always subsists and is for ever learning. . . Those whom we call the ancients were veritably new in all things, and properly speaking were human beings in infancy; since we have added to their knowledge the experiences of the centuries that have followed them, it is in us that the antiquity we revere in them may be found" (II, 138-141; 79-81).

he makes it dependent upon an absolute, in which are to be found in proximity and in contact the two extremes between which moves all that is relative; extremes which are themselves "relative to one another", in such a way that "one depends upon the other, and one leads to the other" (*72*; XII, 82; 352. cf. IX, 268; 183). In other words, using the language of the moderns, Pascal's conception does not exclude—on the contrary, it postulates—beyond *local time*, a *universal time*, or a certain kind of succession perceived by the thought which, to use his admirable expression, "encompasses the universe" (*348*).

[1] This remarkable fragment was probably written in 1647 (II, 129-145; 74-83). It has been preserved for us by Guerrier, and was published for the first time by Bossut with the title: *De l'autorité en matière de philosophie.*

Such is the law of human progress—a progress, let us note, in the realm of knowledge, not in the realm of moral order, and a progress due, not to irrevocable force, but to human effort.

"Man is created only for infinity." Who has been a better illustration of these striking words than Pascal himself? *Interrupta pendent opera:* all his works are left unfinished, interrupted by death; of all of them he has left us only fragments. It is as if a "spell" had been cast over this wonderful mind, a spell that none could lift, that none indeed would have been capable of lifting. For Pascal, like Michael Angelo had too strong a sense of the infinite complexity of reality, of the infinite grandeur and infinite beauty of the divine to be satisfied with anything human, and be able to find rest here below.[1] Yet what completed work is equal to the contemplation of such a mind and spirit, ever surpassing its own efforts in its aspiration toward the Infinite?

[1] cf. Michael Angelo's words at the moment of death, and the various poems written by him (Romain Rolland, *Vie de Michel-Ange*, pp. 166, 171, 181 (Paris, Hachette, 1911).

# III

## FROM PASCAL'S FIRST TO HIS FINAL CONVERSION (1646-1654)

## HIS EXPERIENCE OF THE WORLD

## HIS EXPERIENCE OF GOD

SOME of my readers may perhaps be wondering when we are going to start upon Pascal's philosophy, and it may astonish them to hear that we are already in the middle of it. Nevertheless, when we think over the matter, their surprise is comprehensible. We are accustomed to consider philosophy as a system, and they may be asking when we shall begin to study Pascal's *system*. Now Pascal has no system. He undoubtedly has a philosophy, but it is not, like others, an abstract dialectic or a juggling with concepts; it is a living dialectic, the aspiration of a soul towards the infinite. It is not an intellectual structure; it is built up and developed within his soul; all the experiences he has lived through—in his science, in the world, and in his religious faith—help in its advance. There is no watertight compartment between his life and his work, nor is there any, either, in his life and in his work.

As a rule we are inclined to imagine Pascal's development as development along one line—first of all science, then worldly experience, then religion. This image is not a correct one. Pascal's development is not accomplished along one straight course, but by progressive fathoming in many channels. From the beginning of his life until its end Pascal is always and at the same time a *scientist*, a *man*, and a *Christian*. In proportion, however, as he progresses, he goes further in all these directions. As his mental powers extend and increase, he grasps scientific truth with a more direct and a wider vision; he penetrates deeper into the heart and life of man, and he comes nearer to the God of Jesus Christ. Then, as is natural, the better acquainted he is with science, with the world, and religion, the more justly does he estimate their comparative worth, and the more does he become attached to that which is of value, that which alone can satisfy his need for the infinite. This is why we may say roughly that he went from science to the world, and from the world to God, in the sense that he was led, and as it were constrained, to put each of these objects in its rank and order, to be able to realize finally that God, when He reigns in our soul, does not admit of our sharing Him with other aims, but wills to reign in undivided supremacy. This God does not debar the love of knowledge, any more than He excludes the joys and the duties of social life, but He demands of the soul that it shall love these things, His creations, not in themselves and for themselves, but in Him and for Him. This is why Pascal, when he has *understood* and *seen*, will give himself wholly to God and, without ceasing to be a scientist and a social being, will be such in a different spirit, because he will refer everything to God, and from henceforth God will be to him the end, as He is the beginning, of all things.

It is the story of this soul that we are now about to study. I shall relate Pascal's life in as objective a way as I can, effacing myself to let him speak, and I shall do this with all the respect that the subject demands. We are here in the presence of a mystery, for the influence of the Unseen upon a human soul cannot be perceived by any human being; it remains mysterious even to him who benefits by it. We can only point out its visible traces, and note how they lead us to the threshold of the place where truth reveals itself to the soul, where words are powerless.

There is one feature that strikes us first of all in this history of Pascal, a feature that we should bear in mind if we would understand it. This is the slow and protracted inner travail which is accomplished in him, unconsciously to himself. Pascal's mind expands in all directions, and everything brings him back to its very centre. He gives himself up with passionate ardour to physics, and his study of physics teaches him that it is the peculiar property of reason to submit itself to the *fact*, that is, to the experiment, if it is a question of physics; to the institution, human or divine, and to authority, if it is a question of history or theology. It teaches him that reality surpasses all our imaginings, and that man himself infinitely outstrips humanity, because he is created for infinity alone. He devotes himself ardently to mathematics, and mathematics teaches him that by the law which estimates chances and assigns "points" (the *règle des partis*), he must stake upon God. Mathematical science reveals to him the twofold infinity in nature, its greatness and its littleness, the discontinuity of orders, and the disproportion between the finite and the infinite. He lives in the world, and the world makes him realize that man is not created for thought alone, but for love, and that side by side with the *esprit de géométrie*, there is the *esprit de finesse*, there is the heart. Finally this heart of his, searching for an object that can fill it, cannot discover it in anything that is created, and perceives, as St. Augustine has said, that God alone can satisfy its longing. *Irrequietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te, Domine.*

Thus in his life and his work, as in all work in which the order of charity is involved, there is manifest a secret disposition to relate all things to the end, that the end may be always displayed.[1] When it appears in sight, everything assumes its own significance; all the material previously accumulated is organized; it is like the fuel for a pure and ardent flame. Let us preserve this carefully in mind; we shall see later its significance and its service.

In 1646, according to Marguerite Périer's story,[2] an incident occurred which, under God's providence, was the means of bringing Étienne Pascal and all his family to the knowledge of God and to genuine piety. Étienne, having dislocated his thigh by a fall on the ice, was looked after for a period of three months by two kindly gentlemen, M. Deslandes and M. de la Bouteillerie. These gentlemen, having been touched by the teaching of the curé of Rouville, Father Guillebert, placed themselves under his direction, and resolved to think henceforth of God only, to study the way of salvation, and devote their services to their fellows. Guillebert, a sort of Jansenist, though unavowed,[1] while remaining the mildest of men and endowed with grace that conquered all who knew him, was imbued with the spirit of Saint-Cyran, that prophetic personality whose counsels were "a kind of commandment" and who "waged charitable war" upon the souls of men. In his turn Guillebert had undertaken a kind of religious revival which, spreading from one to another, was winning all the countryside. The two "Rouvillian" gentlemen made Guillebert known to the Pascal family; they lent Étienne and his children Saint-Cyran's books, showed them the bad use they were making of their talents in consecrating them not to God but to worldly vanities and human science; they urged them to be converted and follow the narrow way of the Gospel, giving themselves entirely to God, and making Divine excellence the goal of all their actions. They succeeded so well that Étienne and his two younger children, recognizing where truth lay, were sensible of it, loved it, and embraced it with one mind,[2] and shortly afterwards M. and Mme. Périer, having come to Rouen, followed their example and placed themselves also under Guillebert's guidance. It appears that from this time Jacqueline conceived the idea of becoming a nun. As for Mme. Périer, she renounced the world and its pleasures, and exchanged her children's gaily-trimmed dresses for clothing of "grey homespun without lace or ribbons" (I, 32).

---

[1] *283.* Thus, in studying Pascal's life and work, we shall see the same things constantly reappearing, but always with a different significance.

[2] *Vie d'Étienne Pascal* (I, 17).

---

[1] Later, however, he repudiated the development of Jansenism (Brémond, *op. cit.* IV, p. 346, note 2).

[2] Pascal writes to Mme Périer, Apr. 1, 1648 (II, 249; 88) "My father anticipated us all in this matter," but, according to Marguerite Périer (I, 20) and Mme Périer (I, 62), it was Blaise who converted all his relatives.

And Blaise Pascal? Was what has been styled his "first conversion" a real *conversion*, in the full sense of the word?

We know Plato's famous allegory, in which he compares men to captives bound in chains in a cave, their backs to the light, unable to see anything but the shadows projected on the floor of the cave, which they take for real things. In order that one of these captives may see real and actual things, he must be freed from his chains, forced to rise and turn round, to look and to advance towards the light; and this "conversion"[1] will cause him intolerable agony on account of the dazzling rays which at first prevent him from discerning objects. It is only at the cost of long and painful effort that he will learn to see, and to recognize as alone real, objects which until now have been invisible to him, and that he will be able at last to raise himself with his whole soul to the Idea of Good, which is the sun of the world of intellect.

Pascal seems to have had in mind this allegory of the greatest thinker of pagan antiquity, and he illumined it with the brightness of his religious faith when he wrote: "We ought to look upon ourselves as criminals in a prison that is filled with likenesses of their liberator and instructions to be followed for their escape from bondage; but it must be admitted that these saintly characteristics cannot be perceived without supernatural insight, for, just as all things speak of God to those who know Him, and disclose Him to those who love Him, these same things conceal Him from those who know Him not." In other words, the "phantoms" in the midst of which we live reveal God to those whom He enlightens, but conceal Him from those who, blinded by the darkness of the world, fasten upon it and make it the final goal of their desires, instead of seeing in it the symbols and the signs which represent Him; "a carnal and Jewish blindness which takes the shadow for the substance" (II, 251).

---

[1] *Republic*, VII, 515C; 518D: *περιαγωγή, μεταστραφήσεται.*

Now did Pascal possess this supernatural insight which makes the soul perceive that "corporal things are but an image of spiritual things," that "God alone should be the final aim as He alone is the true beginning," and that, as this God "is much more jealous of our affection than of our reverence, it is evident that there is no crime more offensive and more detestable than to love created beings supremely, even though they are an image of Him" (II, 249-251; 88-90)? Most assuredly, as he wrote to Mme. Périer (26th January, 1648), "he has realised his shortcomings infinitely more since these visits" and from them "he has reaped for himself only a perplexity and trouble that God alone can soothe; and he will think things out carefully, without excitement or anxiety, knowing, as he does, that these would remove him yet further from Him." He had acquired therefore the first virtue of the Christian—the grace of humility. He realized what conversion is, and what life in God should be, and he described it in wonderful terms: "Whereas the children of this world acquit themselves of their obligations by contenting themselves with a restricted perfection, because worldly perfection is also restricted, God's children must set no limits to their purity and their perfection, because they form part of a body which is wholly divine and of infinite perfection, for we see that Jesus sets no limits to His command of perfection, and that He proposes for us a model in which it is seen to be infinite, when He says: Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."[1]

He *comprehended* that conversion is like this; but to *comprehend* divine things, "to hear in them a secret language, unknown to those who know not the things of heaven," it is not enough to have learnt them once and have retained them clearly; "it is essential that the same grace that alone can first impart them should continue its teaching, and

[1] *Mt.* V, 48.

render it ever-present by constantly renewing it in the hearts of the faithful, to give it permanent life, just as God continually renews the beatitude of the blessed. . . With this necessity in mind, it is easy to see that we must constantly be making fresh efforts to acquire this renewal of the spirit, since we cannot preserve a former grace save by the acquisition of a fresh one. We must accordingly be ever on the watch to purify ourselves within. . ."[1] Now this *purification* which is essential to *comprehension* was not yet practised by Pascal. *He knew that he must yield all to God to become a child of God, yet he had not yielded all to Him.*

Despite this initiation of his mind into a more personal and an inner Christian life, he continued to live as he had hitherto lived. He pursued his researches and his attempts to perfect the calculating machine; he began his experiments on the vacuum; he waged war upon his opponents and vindicated his own rights at the same time as those of truth. He does not appear to have changed his habits, or practised poverty, mortification of the flesh, and obedience, as he was to do in so simple and sublime a way in the later years of his life.

At that time he thought less about reforming himself—a task which is the sign of a true conversion—than of reforming others, like those novices of whom St. John of the Cross speaks, who are much more perturbed about the faults of others than about their own.[2] A former Capuchin, Jacques Forton, known in religion as Brother Saint-Ange, a doctor of theology of Bourges University and author of a little book on the alliance between faith and reason,[3] presumed to announce a new doctrine, capable of bringing into the whole body of truth and reconciling with it the partial or scattered truths which, separated from their source, constitute error. Yet more, from this superior point of view, he pretended to establish and demonstrate by reason, without recourse to tradition or authority, the dogmas of the Trinity and of the Incarnation. He argued that since God acted in all things from reasonable motives, it was possible for the reason to know all that God would have had to do and, consequently, to know all mysteries by the aid of reason alone. Pascal and two of his friends, Du Mesnil and Auzout, denounced to the Archbishop of Rouen twelve heretical propositions advanced by Saint-Ange in two private conversations he had had with them. Pascal's position was a very strong one. He said—and in this he was by no means a Jansenist in sentiment—that one might, "in accordance with the very principles of common sense, demonstrate many things that one's opponents declare to be contrary to it; and well-directed reasoning will lead to belief in them, although one ought to believe them without the aid of reason."[1] In other words, *faith is in no sense contrary to reason, but it goes further than reason.* Just as, in physics, reason has to yield to the results of experiment even when they contradict our theories and our conceptions, so, in matters of faith, it must yield to the facts and verities that are well attested and assured, even though these may be incomprehensible to the reason; "it is authority alone that can elucidate them for us . . . because it is inseparable from truth, and we can know truth only through it."[2] Pascal would not allow reality, and still more, God, to be made to bow to our measures, and he was undoubtedly right; his theories were admirable, both for their force and accuracy. But he was a little too anxious to prove himself in the right, and in his zeal for truth we find that he was somewhat lacking in charity to others.

---

[1] Letter to Mme Périer, Nov. 5, 1648.

[2] cf. Brémond, *op. cit.* IV, pp. 348-9, and Strowski, II, p. 203 *et seq.*, contrasting with Mme Périer's account.

[3] *Vide* Mme Périer's story of this affair and the *Récit de deux conférences ou entretiens particuliers tenus les vendredi ler et mardi 5 février 1647*, edited Ap. 30, 1647, and countersigned by Pascal (I, 349-403).

He was lacking in it also with respect to his sister Jacqueline, whom he loved tenderly nevertheless. After the suppression of a great many of the Intendants' offices by royal decree, 11th July, 1648, Étienne Pascal had returned to Paris with his children, and towards the end of 1650, after a year's stay at Clermont, he finally established himself there. On September 24th of the following year he died, and with regard to this event Pascal wrote an admirable letter to M. and Mme. Périer.[1] "If," he said, "we regard this occurrence, not as the result of chance or of a fatal necessity, but as the hidden will of God and the ordering of His providence, we shall humbly and silently adore the impenetrable depths of His secret decrees . . . and uniting our wills with God's will, we shall desire with Him and for Him that which He has willed in us and for us to all eternity. . . There is no consolation for us save in the truth. . . Let us then consider death in the truth that the Holy Spirit has taught us. Let us consider it in Christ Jesus; we shall then comprehend that life, the life of the Christian, is a continual sacrifice, and death its fulfilment and crown. We shall see in death no longer, like those who have no hope, a foul corruption, but the sacred and eternal temple of the Holy Spirit, through whose means the soul is revived and united with the Supreme Principle of life. Let us then trust in God; let us make him whom we have lost[2] live again before God in us, through the union of our own hearts; we must hope that from our very grief God will extract a source of joy for us, if we yield ourselves to His guidance."

---

[1] *Vide* Pascal's account of his interviews with M. de Rebours, in a letter to Mme Périer, Jan. 26, 1648.

[2] Preface to the *Traité du vide* (II, 131; 75).

Nevertheless, Pascal did not yet practise that "sacrifice in which he discerned the hidden virtue of human life.[3] Finding himself somewhat embarrassed financially, he asked Jacqueline to come and live in his house, that they might pool their resources. Jacqueline gently but energetically refused any longer to delay the design conceived four years earlier, that of entering the convent at Port Royal. Once the matters connected with the inheritance had been settled, she put it into execution (4th January, 1652), and wrote her brother a loving letter, in which she begged him to consent to her plan; not that she needed his consent to carry the matter through, but so that she might accomplish it with a joyful and tranquil spirit. "Do not deprive me of what you are unable to give me!" This letter irritated Pascal. After having seen his sister, however, he was softened, and upon M. d'Andilly's entreaties, he finally gave the consent asked for. But when Jacqueline, after her year of noviciate, was arranging for her profession and told her brother and sister that she desired to make over to Port Royal her share of the inheritance received from her father, Pascal, as also Mme. Périer, was greatly incensed at finding himself disinherited, in favour of strangers, of a fortune which he very much needed to enable him to continue his experiments and launch his arithmetical machine, which "the new Archimedes" had just succeeded in getting accepted by the aristocracy of the Parisian world and even by Queen Christina of Sweden.[1] Moreover, the arrangements made with Jacqueline permitted of his refusing her this dowry,[2] and he refused it. To renounce his right to it demanded a fervent charity such as he did not yet possess, and Jacqueline was accepted at Port Royal without any dowry. But her brother, in the course of a touching interview, noticed her extreme sadness, and the effort she made to appear lively and show him as cheerful a countenance as possible; he felt ashamed, and resolved to put an end to this state of affairs by taking upon himself all the expense and all the risks of giving up the inheritance. The dowry was not accepted by Mother Angélique, however, until she was quite certain that Pascal was doing this willingly, and from motives of piety, not from pride. The business part of it was then carried through,[1] and Jacqueline made her profession on 5th June, 1653.

---

[1] Oct. 17, 1651 (II, 537-561; 95-107).

[2] "One of the most lasting and practical deeds of charity towards the dead is to do the things that they would have us do, were they still on earth . . . By doing this, we make them live again in us to some extent" (II, 558; 105).

[3] For what follows, consult the legal extracts of Oct. 1651 (II, 565); Jacqueline's letters to her brother, March 7, 1652, and her sister, May 10, 1652; also the story of Sister Jacqueline, June 10, 1653 (III, 11, 21, 51-94).

---

[1] See Pascal's letter to Queen Christina, which was sent with the computer about June, 1652 (III, 29; III); and Loiret's account of a gathering held at the house of the duchess d'Aiguillon, Richelieu's niece (III, 25),

[2] This was because Jacqueline's income would cease on her profession.

At this time Pascal was very far from God. His first conversion had revealed to him that there was something lacking although he had not before suffered from lack of it; but it had not given him the necessary strength or the means of remedying this. "How great a distance there is between knowing God and loving Him" (*280*). Pascal knew God, but he did not yet love Him; he was indeed far from loving Him; and the feeling he had of this distance from God threw him into a kind of despair.[2] He recognized the greatness and the pre-eminence of the mind, and in the royal power he saw only the image of the power of mind; this second empire appeared to him "of a superior order, as much above mind as mind is above matter."[3] But he had not yet recognized that intellectual greatness is only an image of holiness; he had not yet risen to the order of charity; he had a sense of it and suffered on account of it, and thus he was a prey to that "dark night of the soul" whence light was finally to emerge.

He was attached to the world, and in tranquil enjoyment of those "vain and brittle" things the world offers to those who are addicted to its pleasures;[4] he found a satisfaction in them, and they turned his eyes away from the contemplation of that which alone was essential.

This is the time alluded to by Port Royal as that of his "dissipations," which we call his "worldly period." We must not exaggerate its importance or its duration. Pascal's worldliness extended at most over a period of two years—from Jacqueline's entering Port Royal in January 1652, until towards the end of the year 1653, when a great distaste for the world took possession of him. This period also includes a stay of six months at Clermont. As for the pretended dissipations of Pascal, by the generality of men they would no doubt have been considered perfect uprightness, if not even lofty morality; moreover, Mme. Périer expressly tells us that[1] "by God's mercy he has been preserved from sensuality and vice," which no-one has flagellated more vigorously than he. We have but to recall his vehement declaration: "Let those who believe that man's happiness is in his carnal existence, and that those who would turn him from lust are wrong, wallow and die in their lusts" (*692*).

---

[1] A dowry was settled on Jacqueline on June 4th, 1653 (III, 41).

[2] *Sur la conversion du pécheur* (X, 422; 197).

[3] Letter to Queen Christina (III, 30-31; 112).

[4] *Sur la conversion du pécheur* (X, 423; 197).

In any case, although his life was "exempt from grave crimes," it is certain that Pascal knew the world and its diversions, gambling, theatres, and the society of women. He became a companion of the young Duc de Roannez, governor of Poitou, whom the new Archimedes captivated, and who possibly attached him to his train, in accordance with a fashion then common among the aristocracy. During the summer of 1652, Pascal seems to have accompanied Roannez in a journey in Poitou made with the Chevalier de Méré; he wrote verses in praise of a lady living at Fontenay-le-Comte near Poitiers, and became connected with the society of the district, refined and cultivated people of noble nature and rare culture. Méré has given us a quaint account of this journey,[2] in which Pascal is described in such a way that we cannot fail to recognize him.

> "The D. de R." he writes, "has a mathematical mind, and with a view to his entertainment on the way he had made provision of a friend on the further verge of youth, who was not much known in those days, but who since then has made a great stir in the world. This person was

---

[1] I, 64; 15. cf. Pascal's characteristic words in his prayer asking God to grant him a good use for his bodily sufferings. "Oh, Lord, although my life has been exempt from grave crimes, occasions for which Thou hast removed from me, it has nevertheless displeased Thee greatly by its continual negligence . . . indolence, and the complete futility of my thoughts and actions, and by the entire waste of the time Thou hadst granted me for Thy adoration."

[2] Strowski refuses to recognize Pascal in this man "on the further verge of youth," and even believes it may be Descartes, an assumption very difficult to maintain (II, p. 231, note; p. 416). Méré's description, even if not taken literally, applies well to Pascal, of whom Racine writes that, even when young he appeared much older on account of the austerity he practised, and his constant and exhausting study of profound matters.

> a sound mathematician, and he was nothing more. These abstract sciences do not give their devotees the tone of society, and he had nothing of the man of taste or the man of tact. He would burst in upon our talk, whatever we were saying, so abruptly that he made us laugh. . . After the lapse of two or three days, he appeared to wake up to his deficiencies, listened more than he discoursed, began to ask questions, and would sometimes draw out a set of tablets and note down a remark. The odd thing is that, before we reached Poitiers, he said scarcely anything but what was excellent, and much the same as we should have said ourselves. . ."[1]

Pascal, then, renounced mathematics, and was initiated into a new world; those who introduced him to it and helped him to prove its depths were Miton and Méré.[2]

Miton is a somewhat puzzling personage, possessed of a rare natural eloquence, of that incisive quality which has led people to compare him with Montaigne. He was an inveterate gambler, desperately anxious to be the perfect man of the world; to us he seems to be a disenchanted sceptic, dissatisfied with life, and, if it were not for some idle thoughts that amuse him, ready to give "all for a mere bagatelle." Pascal quotes him frequently in the *Pensées*. "Self is hateful. You, Miton, conceal self, but do not thereby destroy it; therefore you are still hateful" (*455*). "To reproach Miton, that he is not troubled that God will reproach him" (*192*). "(Miton) indeed sees that human nature is corrupt, and that men are not virtuous, but he does not know why they cannot rise higher" (*448*).

The Chevalier de Méré is much better known to us. He was a great admirer of Plato, versed in many foreign languages and a past master in the niceties of his own. A traveller and man of the world, a gambler, a witty talker, he had no lack of good connections and also plenty of debts; he was a very finished gentleman, but extremely

[1] Translation given in Mary Duclaux's "Portrait of Pascal," p. 97.

[2] For Miton and Méré, cf. XII. lxxviii; 116. Strowski, II, pp. 244-269.

indifferent in religious matters. His mind was thoughtful and deliberate; above all extraordinarily shrewd. This man, who knew thoroughly both the Court and the world, fully realized also the artificiality of worldly things. He appreciated nature and he enjoyed solitude, but he enjoyed still more the society of women, in whom he recognized a gift for seeing "in the hearts and minds of those who pay them court" all they must do or say "in order to win the first place there." To Méré the ideal, the "quintessence of all the virtues" is good breeding (*honnêteté*), which he defines as "the art of excelling in all that concerns the pleasures and the proprieties of life." It proceeds from both heart and mind; its constituents are correct and subtle discernment, kindliness, uprightness, sincerity, and above all, moderation; "the right sentiment helps one to perceive, between excess and deficiency, a certain mean which is of more importance in pleasing others than anything else one can find." This art of good breeding and decorous behaviour cannot be imparted; it has neither rule nor law, its sole rule being to have none, but to vary with people and with occasions. It enables one to adapt oneself readily to the circumstances of life, to judge clearly all that presents itself to the mind, to accustom oneself to read people's thoughts and feelings by almost imperceptible signs, and to maintain strict moderation in all one's actions. In short, it depends upon mental alertness. "Ready wit is a kind of beacon; in an instant it shines forth like a lightning flash on all sides." "Mental power consists in comprehending things and being able to consider them from all points of view, judging clearly what they are and assessing their true value; discerning what one thing has in common with another, and also wherein it differs from it."[1]

Mental power and good breeding—this is what Méré, and his own social life too, revealed to Pascal; this is what he looked for and appreciated in the man whom he describes as "the greatest mathematician in Europe," Fermat; that, too, is what he was to inculcate in a child who would be a prince. The ethics of good breeding will suffice for a well-ordered life, if it is not enough for salvation.

---

[1] *De la conversation*, p. 29. cf. Pascal's "The more intellectual we are ourselves, the more originality do we find in others" (*7*). "All is one, yet all is diverse" (*116*).

Thus this wonderful mind of his turned to good account everything that came before it. From his transitory life in the world he was to gain a most fruitful lesson, the one best fitted to enlarge his experience, permitting him no longer merely to demonstrate truth or establish it in the abstract, but to make it accepted by others, to influence their hearts and wills, to please, to touch, and thus to conquer. Until this period he had known the methods of physics and geometry; he now knew the heart of man and the way it must be treated, entering into it, and identifying himself with it in order to turn it to God. And this it is that confers its stupendous value on his *Apology*.

He was already putting this method into practice, and with great success. Is the *Discours sur les passions de l'amour* Pascal's work? The question has been hotly disputed, and it is so still.[1] It is not certain that this pamphlet is from Pascal's hand, but in any case we find in it his ideas and his expressions, and that is enough for us.

> Man is created for thought; but pure thought, which would make him happy if he could sustain it, fatigues and discourages him. He could not live a life of mere thought; he must have action and excitement—that is, he must at times be agitated by passions, whose sources he feels to be profound and powerful within him. . .[2]
>
> In a great soul all is great.
>
> There are two kinds of mind, the one mathematical, and the other what we may call intuitive. The first takes slow, steady, fixed views, but the second has a versatility which is applied at the same time to the different parts of

---

[1] We possess two MSS. copies of this *Discours*, the first of which bears the note: "attributed to Pascal"; Brunschvicg and Faguet both favour this theory, though many others doubt it.

[2] cf. III, 131; 130, "it is the wretched consequence of our human nature."

that which it admires. From the eyes it proceeds to the heart, and by the outward movement it knows what is passing within.[1]

Man does not like to dwell within himself; nevertheless he loves, and he must therefore seek elsewhere something to love. Only in beauty can he find this, but since he himself is the most beautiful creature God has ever created, he must find within himself the type of the beauty he seeks elsewhere. . . (Such beauty alone, embodied in a different sex) can fill the great void created by his coming out of himself. . .

Each man has his own model of beauty, and seeks for a copy of it throughout the world. Nevertheless women usually determine this model, for they exercise absolute empire over the minds of men. . . The fashion of the moment and of different countries often decide what is to be called beautiful.

The more intelligence one has, the more original beauty does one find, but one must not be in love, for then one can find but one beauty.

And then this maxim, in which we find the Pascalian method already defined. "One often writes things which can only be proved by making everybody look within himself to find the truth that is asserted. The force of the proofs of what I say consists in this" (III, 128; 129).

Pascal had discovered the *logic of the heart.* He grasped its nature perfectly, but he did not yet perceive its object.

Was Pascal ever in love? Faguet asserts it as a fact. Faugère goes further, and tells us he was in love with Mlle. de Roannez, but this is a wholly gratuitous supposition. It is, however, not impossible that Pascal may have loved, but certainly "without any sort of vice or irregularity" (I, 130), despite what Jacqueline and Pascal may say later about "the odour of the slimy trough in which he had been engulfed," and of his "horrible bonds."[1] There is no good foundation for the tradition related by Fléchier who, in his *Mémoires sur les grands jours d'Auvergne*, shows us Pascal paying assiduous attention to a Sappho of Clermont, "the brightest and wittiest mind the town contained." But from Marguerite Périer and from Racine we know that at one time Pascal contemplated marriage and even took steps to bring it about.

---

[1] cf. *Pensées 1, 283.* "One does not prove that one must be loved by setting forth in order the reasons for love. That would be absurd," and Méré's words in the *Discours de l'esprit*: "'What must I do to convince you that I love you?' —'You must love me,' she replied."

Certain passages in the *Discours* are in the style of a confidential avowal, and the whole *Discours* seems to bear witness to a direct experience of that "ardour of love" which is sympathy of thought, which inspires respect and veneration, the cause of so much joy and such uneasiness, and whose greatest eloquence is silence.

But no human love was able to satisfy this heart made for God.

Towards the end of the year 1653,[2] Pascal felt this need of God, or rather, he realized the void in his heart which true and lasting good alone could satisfy, both during and after this life. In this state of mind, he said, it seemed that "the soul considers all things, and its own self, in an entirely new way. This new light makes it afraid, and excites an uneasy feeling that troubles the serenity it had found in the things that were its delight. It can no longer calmly enjoy what has hitherto charmed it; its enjoyment is constantly hampered by scruples, and this introspection prevents it from finding its accustomed pleasure in the things to which it had freely yielded. Yet the soul finds greater distaste in pious exercises than in worldly pleasures. On the one hand the ever-present things of sense have more power to move it than the hope of things unseen, while on the other the stability of that which is hidden from sight touches it more than the emptiness of things seen.[3] And thus the presence of the one and the stability of the other engage in a struggle for its affection, whilst the emptiness of the one and the absence of the other excite its aversion, so that it becomes perturbed and bewildered. . ." Then the soul begins to realize its benighted condition, to be astonished at it—and this astonishment brings with it a salutary distress and a pious humility which raises it above the generality of men and makes it seek for the Supreme Good, not in the things within or outside or before it, but those that are above it; and it does not end its search until it arrives at the throne of God, where at last it begins to find repose.

---

[1] Jacqueline's letters of Jan. 19 and 25, 1655 (IV, 18 and 62).

[2] "More than a year ago," writes Jacqueline on Dec. 8th, 1654 (IV, 15).

[3] Here we have in embryo, as it were, the wager argument.

In this anguished yet finally successful search for the Supreme Good, the soul unconsciously becomes detached from all earthly things. As soon as it strays from its chosen path it comes back to it, as if in spite of itself, for all things urge it to divest itself of human affairs to attach itself henceforth to God alone.

Pascal had "turned his attention to the world," and the world had re-awakened within him a feeling and a need that it could not itself satisfy, so that he experienced "a great contempt for the world, and an almost insupportable aversion for the society of worldlings."[1]

At this time he applied himself to mathematical analysis, and in that domain he made some admirable discoveries, to which we shall revert later.[2] Applying his calculations to the areas of parabolas and the evaluation of continuous functions, he propounded the theory of the integral calculus. While studying, at Méré's request, the settlement of the amount to be assigned to two players who terminate the game before its end, he invented, simultaneously with Fermat, the calculus of probabilities. And from all this he gained fresh insight regarding his objective. He saw that the geometrical mind must comprehend a large number of theories at once without confounding them.[1] "The always admirable connection that Nature, which loves unity, establishes between things that are to all appearance entirely different. . ." (III, 367) permitted of his extending to the whole of nature the rule that a continuous magnitude of a given order is not increased when magnitudes of an inferior order are added to it, however many they may be. Points cannot add anything to lines, nor bodies to minds, nor minds to the order of charity. His study of geometrical matters—movement, number, space, which may be increased or diminished indefinitely without ever arriving at being greater or less than any given quantity, led his mind to the consideration of the two infinites, the infinitely great and the infinitely little, an incomprehensible idea which is none the less true.[2] Finally, he applied the law of chances (*règle des partis*) to the question: God exists, or He does not exist, and demonstrated to the freethinker that since he must stake on something, he must stake upon God, that is, risk the finite to gain the infinite. These are stupendous ideas, "worth far more than all the rest of mathematics together" (XI, 270; 184), and they contain in germ all the philosophy of the *Pensées*.

---

[1] Jacqueline's letter of Dec. 8, 1654 (IV, 15).

[2] It was from this time, in fact, that his *Traité du triangle arithmétique* and many other mathematical treatises date, and Pascal's correspondence with Fermat on probabilities and on the law of chances took place then.

Pascal read, above all Epictetus and Montaigne; these were the two books he mostly used.[3] Both afforded him instruction about the quality of human beings, and brought him back to the problem of destiny. Epictetus showed him that man is great if he conforms to the divine order; but Epictetus, although he knew man's duty, did not perceive his shortcomings, and was carried away by his pride in what man can do. Montaigne showed him that man by his own efforts cannot grasp the essence of things; his powers are limited and he cannot rise higher unless God lend him a hand. But in this state of uncertainty Montaigne was content to remain in doubt, following the usual custom. He did not realize that "although we see all the miseries that close in upon us and take us by the throat, we have an irrepressible instinct that raises us" (*411*).

---

[1] On this subject see Méré's testimony, and that of Leibniz (II, 377; IX, 224), as well as Méré's well-known letter to Pascal, formulating the objections to the infinite divisibility of the continuum, to which Pascal replies in the fragment *De l'esprit géométrique*, (IX, 215-223).

[2] *De l'esprit géométrique* (IX, 240-270; 164-184) the date of which is unfortunately unknown to us, though it is commonly believed to have been composed after Pascal's entering Port Royal.

[3] *Entretien avec M. de Saci* (IV, 26-57; 146-162), which brings us to the beginning of 1655, the time when Pascal came to live at Port Royal, was first published in 1728.

Finally, Pascal was a sufferer. From the age of eighteen he did not pass a single day without pain, and in 1647 his infirmities had greatly increased. His too intense application to science had given him intolerable headaches; he had intestinal trouble that obliged him to imbibe warm liquids only, and these drop by drop; and, lastly, he suffered from a kind of paralysis of the lower limbs which had reduced him to the use of crutches for walking.[1] But illness, which is a terrible affliction for the ordinary man, is a salutary test for the Christian, and since he knew that virtue is perfected through suffering, Pascal "joyfully turned all his sufferings into his penitential sacrifice, for in these we know Jesus Christ the Crucified, who must be the Christian's sole knowledge and the unique glory of his life" (I, 63-4).

The benefit to be obtained from suffering has been expressed by Pascal in a meditation of pure and lofty spirituality, unsurpassable in its fervour and its sensitiveness: his prayer asking of God that he may make a right use of illness.[2]

> O Lord, Whose spirit is so loving and so mild in all things. . .
>
> Thou hadst given me health in order to serve Thee, and I have put it to wholly evil use. Now Thou dost send me illness to chasten me; grant that I may not offend Thee by my impatient use of it. . .
>
> Render me unable to enjoy worldly pleasures, either

---

[1] Mme. Périer's testimony (I, 58, 63; 10, 14) and Marguerite Périer's (I, 129).

[2] IX, 323-340; 56-66. This pamphlet was edited in 1670, as dating from Pascal's youth, but according to Mme. Périer, it would belong to the last four years of his life. From the internal evidence it seems more likely to relate to 1654. (cf. Strowski, II, pp. 207, 352.)

through my feebleness, or through my zealous love, that I may enjoy but Thee alone.

O God, Who dost forsake sinners who are hardened in the criminal delights of this world. . .

Thou alone art worthy of love since Thou alone dost endure for ever.

For my soul's good Thou hast overthrown vain idols. . . Grant me, O God, to adore silently the orderings of Thy adorable Providence in the conduct of my life; may Thy scourge be a consolation to me. . .

Yet I realize, O my God, that my heart is so hardened, so filled with worldly ideas and cares, anxieties and ties of the world that neither illness nor health, nor treatises nor books nor the Sacred Writings, nor the Gospel nor the mysteries of the saints, nor almsgiving nor fasting, mortification, miracles, the use of the Holy Sacraments, nor even the sacrifice of Thy body, nor all my own efforts and those of the whole world can aught avail to begin my conversion unless to these things Thou dost add the absolutely marvellous co-operation of Thy grace. Therefore, O my God, I address myself to Thee. . . To whom should I cry, O Lord, to whom should I make my appeal, if not to Thee? Nothing that is not God can fulfil my expectation. It is God Himself whom I demand and whom I seek; it is to Thee alone, O God, that I turn to obtain Thee. Open my heart, Lord. . .

Perfect in me, O God, the good impulses that Thou dost give me. Be the end as Thou art the beginning. . .

Thou sayest: Blessed are they that mourn, and woe unto them that are consoled.

Do Thou, O Lord, love my sufferings. . .

Deign to add Thy consolations to my sufferings, that I may suffer as a Christian. . .

And may I, being ill, as I am, glorify Thee in my sufferings. . . Unite me with Thyself . . . so that, being filled with Thee, it may be no more I that live and suffer, but that Thou mayest live and suffer in me, O my Saviour,

> and that thus, since I have some little share in Thy sufferings, Thou mayest fill me wholly with the glory they have brought to Thee. . .

To seek for God in such a spirit of love is to possess Him already.[1] And does not this long drawn out inner travail, in which there appears the influence of the Divine grace urging the will, this impatience to belong wholly to God, coupled with such humility, submission, even moderation, in a soul whose natural ardour might lead it into great excess, prove that "it is no longer the workings of his own natural spirit that move him?"[2] Is not this a sign that "God is seeking man, and that He seeks him that He may be found?"[3] This sign, however, had not yet been vouchsafed to Pascal; he was awaiting it. Towards the end of September he went to see his sister Jacqueline,[4] and opened his heart to her in a way that touched her, confessing that his distaste for the follies of the world and the constant reproach of his own conscience had detached him from it all, but that he felt himself so abandoned by God that he had no leanings toward the religious side; he told her that he was well disposed to it, yet he felt "that it was his reason and his own mind that urged him to discover what was best, more than the working of God's will in him." He paid several other visits to his sister, and she was satisfied to follow his thought, not leading it, or even using persuasion; she seemed to see his actual growth, so that she scarcely recognized him, especially in his humility, submission, distrust of self, and contempt for the esteem of others. There was only a trace of independence concealed in the depths of his heart, "which made every endeavour to avoid a submission that in his then state of mind could only be entire subjection" (IV, 63).

---

[1] *553* and *555* (Mystery of Jesus).

[2] Jacqueline's letter of Dec. 8, 1654 (IV, 15, 16).

[3] Pascal, *Écrits sur la grâce* (XI, 168) composed about 1656.

[4] *Lettre de la sœur Jacqueline de Sainte-Euphémie Pascal à Mme Périer sa sœur* of Jan. 25, 1655 (IV, 61).

Finally God[1] did subdue this soul that had sought Him so ardently; He responded to his appeal; He sent him fire, light, warmth to enlighten his mind and inflame his soul. In one moment, with an unutterable sense of His presence, He granted Pascal certainty and bliss.

Pascal wrote down the experience of his rapture on a paper which he afterwards carefully copied on a strip of parchment; these were found together, some days after his death, sewn in the lining of his coat. The parchment is lost, but we have a facsimile reproduction from the hand of Louis Périer, and we still possess the paper on which Pascal's fevered hand had traced the thoughts inspired in him by God. This is his well-known *Mémorial.*[2]

It bears a cross at its head, and then the date.

*This year of grace 1654,*
*Monday, November 23rd, Feast of St. Clement, Pope and martyr. From about half-past ten at night, to about half an hour after midnight.*

And then this word, written on a line by itself, which seems to elucidate all the rest:[3]

*FIRE*

that is, light and warmth emanating from a supernatural source, making the soul conscious of the presence of God.[1]

---

[1] Had it not still obtained currency among badly-informed persons, it would be quite superfluous to mention the legend according to which Pascal's conversion was decided by an accident that happened to him on the Pont de Neuilly, when his horses took fright, falling into the river, whilst the harness broke, and the coach remained hanging over the gulf. The fact itself is possibly correct in its main details, though we know of it from an anonymous source only, but if it be authentic its date is still uncertain, and its influence on Pascal's conversion altogether doubtful. (cf. Giraud, *op. cit.* pp. 261-280.) As to the legend of a mental aberration as the result of this accident, causing Pascal thenceforth to believe "that he saw a deep abyss open at his left side", it did not arise until 1737, seventy-five years after Pascal's death, and was accepted only by Voltaire and by the Encyclopedists who wanted to destroy the effect of Pascal's *Apology*. It is a rusty weapon, worthy at most of figuring, as an historical curiosity, in the arsenal of falsifications, or, to use the English word, of "forgeries."

[2] IV, 3 (the facsimile of the autograph and Périer's copy); 142.

[3] This word is written in capital letters in the copy reproduced by Brémond.

In its first part Pascal, raises his soul to God:

*God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,*
*not of the philosophers and the scientists.*

This God is not one who is to be reached by means of metaphysical proofs, ontological arguments, or the teleology in Nature (*543*). He is the personal, definite God of Judaeo-Christianity; the God, not of the dead, but of the living; a God Who makes the soul realize that He is its sole good (*544*).

Thus Pascal attains *assurance;* not merely that of the mind, but of the soul—an *assurance* that engenders *affection, joy, peace.*

The second stage is reached when Pascal goes a step further and perceives that this God is the

*God of Jesus Christ.*

We know God through Jesus Christ alone. Without this Mediator there is no communication with God (*547*). But in Him and through Him we know God, we know ourselves (*548*).

*He can be found only in the ways taught in the Gospel.*

Then there is revealed to the soul the necessity of forgetfulness of the world and of everything save God; but at the same time the greatness of the human soul, which this God delivers, enlightens and beatifies when He penetrates it (*545*).

*The greatness of the human soul.*

This characteristic illuminates him. He has now got beyond assurance; he has as it were a foretaste of eternal bliss, in which assurance is changed into vision and into love. At such a height trouble and joy make but one.[2]

*Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.*

---

[1] *Vide* Baron Hugel's fine book, *The Mystical Element of Religion,* (London, Dent, 1908); the index, under "God," and Vol. I, p. 78.

[2] So too, St. Teresa writes: "I could not account to myself for this simultaneous feeling of pain and pleasure. I was not ignorant of the fact that bodily suffering and spiritual joy were compatible, but such extreme pain of soul united with such intense joy were incomprehensible to me."

The third stage is now reached. The joy of having found God more than doubles his anguish of soul and sadness at having offended God; but from his very grief is born a fresh consolation, through the promise made us by Jesus Christ to fulfil his joy in us.[1] He invokes Him twice over:

*Jesus Christ.*
*Jesus Christ.*

and then repeats twice:

*I have forsaken Him; I fled from Him, renounced and crucified Him.*
*May I never be separated from Him!*
*He maintains Himself in me only by the ways taught in the Gospel.*

And now Pascal knows what he has to do. He sees, he possesses God, to some extent through an *entire* and humble *submission* to *Jesus Christ.* He knows that he must lose his soul in Him to find it once more. It is no longer he that lives; it is God living within him (*782*); and thus losing himself in Him, he conquers himself and acquires his immortal soul.

*Absolute, sweet renunciation.*
*Eternally in bliss, for a brief day's hard training upon earth.*

In losing himself Pascal is won over. He has attained to true faith, a faith which, transcending reason and custom, reaches its aspirations through humiliation; which teaches reason that its right use is to give place and recognize that there is an infinity of things that surpass it. It is a faith that quickens all our actions and transforms the soul; that, without giving it new knowledge, makes it see all things in a new light, and makes it *realize* what it before had merely *conceived* or *repeated.* He knows God with his heart, that is, by faith working through love. God has manifested Himself to his inmost soul; He has bestowed on him the truth in its entirety, his rule of life, felicity; He has revealed to him a logic beyond argument, namely, the order of charity, in the heart of which the contraries of incapacity and greatness meet and are reconciled in the person of Christ Jesus, God and Man.[1]

---

[1] Seventh letter to Mlle Roannez (VI, 220-2; 221).

It was this vivid experience that was to give Pascal's *Apology* its force. He did not prove God's existence by means of theories; he appealed to human experience, reawakening man's sluggish instincts and forcing him to look within himself, that he might go outside himself and find, *beyond* his own nature and then *within* it, that truth whose power and saving grace Pascal had himself experienced.

But he knew that all this was not enough, that faith itself is not enough, as long as one's life is not brought into line with it. He prayed fervently to God that, as He had been pleased to show him his own soul, He would guide it to Him. "For, since it is to God that the soul aspires, it further aspires to reach Him by those means alone which come from God Himself, for it would have Him as its pathway, its object, and its final goal."[2] He sought to model his life on that of his Divine Master, that he might render himself worthy of the grace he had received.

In January 1655 he entered Port Royal. Let us follow him there.

---

[1] *245, 267, 269, 282, 394, 567, 639, 731-733. Entretien avec M. de Saci* (IV, 54; 160).

[2] *Conversion du pécheur* (X, 426; 200).

# IV

## PASCAL AT PORT ROYAL
## THE PROVINCIALES (1655-1657)

There are few among us who do not know those sublime and touching words from the *Mystery of Jesus:* "Be comforted" says Jesus to the soul "thou wouldst not be seeking me if thou hadst not found me." Pascal sought God for a long time; he sought Him in science and in the world, through struggle and despair; he sought Him without finding Him. But to seek Him in such a spirit of humility and love, is not this to have already found Him? And is it not evident that God seeks the soul that is searching for Him thus?

> *Do not be troubled.*
> *Thy conversion is my affair; fear not, and pray with confidence as for me.*
> *I am to thee more a friend than this man or that* . . . .

And the soul replies:

> *Lord, I give Thee all.*

Pascal had given all to God, and God gave Himself to this soul at the same time as it gave itself to Him and through this gift of self prepared to receive grace, which alone can "truly effect salvation." At the end of his *Mémorial* he writes:

> *Entire, sweet submission.*
> *Entire submission to Jesus Christ and to my director.*

The submission, like the renunciation, was indeed an entire one. Pascal, after an interview with his sister, who was to some extent his guide,[1] took leave of his friend the

---

[1] *Lettre de la soeur Jacqueline* (IV, 63-67).

Duc de Roannez, and the day after the Feast of the Epiphany, 7th January, 1655, upon the advice of his new director, M. Singlin, started with the Duc de Luynes for one of his houses, and then obtained a cell among the Solitaries of Port Royal. "He writes to me," says Jacqueline, "that he is happy to find himself lodged like a prince (that is, a prince in St. Bernard's sense), in a lonely spot where he may practise the life of poverty in all things, as far as prudence allows. He attends the whole Office from Prime to Compline, and does not feel the slightest inconvenience from getting up at five o'clock in the morning" (IV, 66-67). M. Singlin provided him with a director "who is an incomparable man, with whom he is delighted"—M. de Saci, "who is zealous-minded and intelligent."[1] Henceforth, either in Paris or in the country, Pascal was at Port Royal.

But, although *at* Port Royal, was he *of* Port Royal? In the seventeenth *Provinciale*, Pascal protested that he was not.

> "I have no more to say than that I am not of it, and to refer you to my letters in which I have said that *I am alone*, and, speaking literally, *I do not belong to Port Royal*. . . I do not adhere to anything on earth save the one Catholic Apostolic Roman Church, in which I desire to live and die, in communion with the Pope its supreme head; for I am thoroughly persuaded that outside the Church there is no salvation."

If we would understand what follows, we must bear these significant words in mind. It is not a lie, or an evasion, or a polemic subterfuge, as those who seek to claim Pascal for Jansenism have endeavoured to make it. The declaration is true, both in the letter and in the spirit. Let us briefly explain it.

Pascal was really converted. His conversion was actually and finally accomplished and, as Mère Angélique says, "the miracle of grace" for so many years expected in vain had at length occurred. Pascal had surrendered *his own*

---

[1] Memoirs of Du Fossé, 1739, p. 103.

*mind*, the mind that related everything to self, desired immediate results, was incensed by obstacles, and masked its desire to conquer by a desire to see truth triumphant;[1] but he had not surrendered his *mental powers;* he still retained all his opinions and thoughts, but they were "depersonalised," if we may put it thus, and submissive to truth. All that he had sought for and loved he found once more in his new life, but he found it exalted, purified, transfigured by faith. In this life of solitude, silence and renunciation, the austerity of which appalled those who viewed it from without, Pascal found that true calm and joy that he had sought in vain in "diversion"; he tasted "incomprehensible" happiness (*139*; XIII, 57; 392).

Pascal was indebted to Port Royal and to the Solitaries for having been fully initiated into this peaceful life devoted to religion. But, as he himself declared, it is quite true that he was not attached to their community, nor had he surrendered his own judgment. Initiated also into theology (of which he knew comparatively little) by the Jansenists, he retained a somewhat strong tinge of Jansenism. No doubt it was on account of this that in his scheme of Christianity he gave such prominence to original sin, and derived such exaggerated consequences from it in all that concerns our corrupt human nature. His mind, however, liberal, powerful, yet absolutely *undeviating*, gainsaying the Jansenist doctrine, abandoned the *sect* to go direct to the *truth*. When he attacked reason, it was with all the powers and resources the reason affords; when he defined its limits, it was that he might the better indicate its greatness, which consists in submitting to reality. Lastly, the sole fact that he undertook the conversion of the unbeliever bore witness to his conviction that man's liberty of choice plays a part in his conversion, and that even if the Divine help be always freely given it may yet be solicited. In his method, mind, and profound humanity, Pascal was not a Jansenist. He tempered

---

[1] On this point, see the remarkable fragment of a letter of Pascal's transcribed by Guerrier, presumably in 1661 (X, 154; 245).

Jansenism with humanism; he surpassed it by the purity and intensity of his spiritual life.

No sooner, however, had he entered Port Royal, than he found himself deeply involved in the struggle in which the Jesuits and the Jansenists were engaged.

We already know the two opposing parties. Let us briefly expound the doctrine over which their strife began, and the respective positions of the adversaries.

In the scheme of Christianity, in order that man may fulfil the moral law in such a way as to merit a supernatural reward, his moral act must have a merit beyond the natural, and be effected by a power that is more than natural. This more than natural power is the free will of man in a state of *sanctifying* grace, aided, moreover, for its accomplishment, by the work of the grace called *actual*. Then the moral act, whilst retaining its lofty value in the natural domain, acquires a supernatural value that earns it the reward which heaven alone can bestow.

Thus the tenets of Christianity affirm with equal assurance these two principles: the all-powerful nature of grace and its necessity for salvation; the liberty of the individual and the need for him to co-operate with grace,[1] in order that it may act within him. These are two equally certain truths, and therefore unimpeachable, although they may appear incompatible.[2] But human reason could not be satisfied with a state in which verities apparently contradictory are reconciled; and by suppressing one or other of the two theses, it tried to re-establish logical unity.

---

[1] That is, *actual* grace. As a matter of fact, *sanctifying* or *habitual* grace does not operate in us; it is merely the working principle, raising our soul, and its higher powers, intelligence and will, to a supernatural state. In the infant, unable to effect anything, sanctifying grace does not operate; it merely raises it to a supernatural state and makes it capable of entering upon eternal life.

[2] To explain the Catholic position, some details are necessary here. According to St. Paul's words (*Rom.* VII, 14-15) grace helps to deliver us, and we cannot be delivered without it; but, in doing this, it leaves us our liberty. Man in a state of grace is free, but he is strong; he could not kill another, for instance. "But then you are not free?" someone may say to him. He is indeed free, but he has the strength to resist evil. We see thus the sense in which grace is termed all-sufficient; man has the power to resist it, no doubt, but he does not in fact resist it when the grace is *efficacious*. On the other hand, when we say that grace is necessary for man to be able to merit supernatural reward, it implies that the mere accomplishment of the natural law is not sufficient for salvation, but that he who does accomplish the natural law has

The Pelagians denied the necessity of grace, confounded nature with what is above nature, and maintained that nature was sufficient to itself. Refuted by St. Augustine, they were condemned by Rome[6] then and on many later occasions, notably at the Council of Trent.

On their side, Luther and Calvin maintained that sin has so thoroughly corrupted human nature that it has destroyed man's free will, and that grace, which God reserves for His elect alone, does everything for man. This implies that we are, as it were, merely inanimate puppets in God's hands. They were condemned for these heretical opinions at the Council of Trent.[7]

The Jansenists, admitting with Baïus that all grace is efficacious, and therefore invincible, and that without the influence of efficacious grace we can accomplish nothing, were also condemned, because they denied, or at any rate grievously imperilled, man's liberty.[8]

The Thomists and the Molinists maintained both theories,[9] differing only upon the method of reconciling human liberty with God's sovereign power. Both admitted therefore, that there is a *sufficient grace*, given by God to all men,[10] by which man's liberty is more or less strengthened, and always in sufficient quantity to prevent him from falling. When man

---

every possibility of having encountered the Holy Spirit and been endowed with grace. God indeed desires that all men shall be saved; Christ died for all men. We cannot love God without being loved by Him; and, God having created man for a supernatural state, if man does what he can, He will not fail to give him what is needful to attain this end. cf. *Heb.* XI, 5-7; *Rom.* II, 15; *Mt.* XIX, 15-19.

[6] Pelagianism by Zosimus in 417-8, and Semi-Pelagianism by the second council of Orange (529), the decrees of which are accepted by the whole Church as matters of faith (Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, 1900, 64 and 144).

[7] Session VI, canon 4 (Denzinger, 696).

[8] Denzinger, 881-959; 966-970.

[9] For this reason the Church left them alone, and Rome would make no ruling, merely forbidding the adversaries to anathematize each other.

[10] This grace, even when only *sufficient*, gives man a *proximate power* to fulfil the law, and this power he uses well or ill, according to his own will.

is preserved from falling, in fact, it must be said, as all agree, that the grace vouchsafed him is not only *sufficient*, but *efficacious*. Now whence arises this characteristic of grace by which the efficacious differs from the sufficient? According to the Molinists, it is due to the consent afforded by man's will to sufficient grace, without which consent grace, though really always the same, would only have been sufficient. According to the Thomists, that is, the partisans of Bañes, it comes from the Divine Will which, besides the sufficient grace given to all men, creates other graces of a different kind; such graces, though efficacious, are not shared by all. In short, grace owes its efficacy both to supernatural influence *and* to the right use of liberty; both have a share in my actions, God as the author, myself as the co-operator.[1] How is this effected? We cannot say. We are in fact dealing here with a relation whose nature is unknown to us, between two terms of which one, the *ego*, is imperfectly known to us, and the other, the infinite, is incomprehensible to us; such a problem is manifestly beyond man's power to solve. We can only say, with St. Vincent de Paul, that if God were to refuse His grace to some men, He would no longer have the right to command or to punish, and if man acted from necessity alone he would have no merit.[2]

When the memorable struggle, to which Pascal was to make so typical a contribution, started, at the beginning of 1655, the fires had already been smouldering for some years. The *Augustinus*, severely attacked by the Sorbonne, had already been included in the condemnation of Baïus by a Papal bull (6th August, 1641). Later, in spite of the defence of it put forward by Arnauld in his *Apology for M. Jansenius* (1644) and in his *Apology for the Holy Fathers* (1651), which constitute an exhaustive exposition of Jansenism, the doctrine of the *Augustinus*, condensed into five propositions by Nicolas Cornet, Syndic of the Faculty of Theology, was expressly condemned at Rome by a Bull of Pope Innocent X on 31st May, 1653.

---

[1] In actual grace there are, over and above the sufficient minimum, numerous degrees known only to God, but in all these degrees God by His grace and man by his will make but one and the same agent, an agent both natural and supernatural. God, however, is always operating, and we are only co-operating; God always goes before us and we do nothing but follow, even when we advance as fast as we can.

[2] Sermon by St. Vincent de Paul on Grace (Abelly, II, p. 674).

The five propositions condemned as heretical are the following:[1]

> 1. Some of the commandments of God are not possible for righteous men to fulfil, even when they desire, and endeavour to accomplish them according to the powers they possess; and the grace which would render these commandments capable of fulfilment is lacking to these men.
> 2. Even in a state of corrupt nature inner grace is always irresistible.
> 3. To deserve reward or to forfeit it in the corrupt state of human nature does not demand a liberty in man which excludes necessity, but a liberty that is unconstrained suffices.[2]
> 4. The Semi-Pelagians admitted the necessity of an inner predisposing grace for each particular act, even for faith in the beginning, and they were heretical in maintaining that this grace was such that man's will could either resist it or obey it.
> 5. To say that Jesus Christ died and shed His blood for all men alike is a Semi-Pelagian doctrine.

Arnauld and the partisans of Jansenius accepted the condemnation, but only by introducing their famous distinction between *fact* and *right*. The fact hinged on whether these propositions are to be found in Jansenius; the question of right was whether they were worthy of condemnation. Port Royal bowed to the Pope's decree in the matter of right, but not in the matter of fact. They maintained that in the condemnation of the propositions Jansenius himself has not been condemned.

[1] Denzinger, 966-970.

[2] *External constraint* is here opposed to *inner necessity*.

In the meantime, a priest at Saint-Sulpice refused absolution to the Duc de Liancourt, whom he accused of favouring the Jansenists. Arnauld, perceiving in this an attempt to oust him and his friends from the Church, at once made an appeal to public opinion in his "Letter to a Person of Quality" (February 24th), and then in his "Letter to a Duke and Peer of the Realm" (July 10); in these he took up again this question of fact and right, attacking the Molinist doctrine of sufficient grace, by showing that grace was wanting to a righteous man in the person of St. Peter. This twofold question, of fact and of right, was submitted to the Faculty of Theology of Paris on 1st December, 1655, and it seemed clear that Arnauld was about to be censured.

It was at this juncture that there appeared (23rd January, 1656) the first "Letter written to a Provincial by one of his Friends on the subject of the present Disputes at the Sorbonne." The dispute, hitherto carried on between theologians, now attracted general attention, and an advocate like Pascal, with his clearness and charm, combining an inimitable candour with absolute purity of style,[1] caused a reaction. The subject was renewed; it excited people's minds, and obtained an unheard-of success. The chancellor Séguier, after reading the first letter, nearly had a stroke, and had to be bled seven times; Savreux the bookseller was arrested on February 2nd. The following day a second letter, "quite fresh, and much more pronounced than the first," was brought to the President in chief. What did it matter henceforth that Arnauld had been censured on the 31st of January by the doctors of the Sorbonne? Public opinion had veered round, Port Royal was triumphant, and its adversaries were deemed absurd. Then, in quick succession, on the 12th and the 15th of February, the Third and the Fourth Letters appeared, and their success went on increasing. It was still further augmented when, with the fifth letter, which was published on March 15th, Pascal introduced, with Escobar and his twenty-four Jesuit Fathers, the question of casuistry. Thousands of copies were eagerly seized upon in Paris or sent out to the provinces, while the Jesuits were vainly endeavouring to discover the elusive "Louis de Montalte." He, meanwhile, was living in retirement, lodged at the little "Auberge du roi David" in the Rue des Poirées behind the Sorbonne. With the seventeenth and eighteenth letters (23rd January and 24th March, 1657) Pascal, after having devoted twelve to discussion of the Jesuits' code of morality, returned to the theological controversy, and then, after having sketched out a nineteenth, stopped short, in the midst of the strife, and with a full consciousness of victory.

---

[1] Du Fossé, *Mémoires*, pp. 151-2.

Meanwhile Pope Alexander VII, in a bull of 16th October, 1656, had confirmed the condemnation of the five propositions as interpreted by Jansenius. Rigorous measures were taken, or predicted, against Port Royal, which was strengthened in its opposition by the miracle of the Holy Thorn occurring on March 24th; while in another quarter, the *curés* of Paris were beginning an attack upon the laxity in moral standards. After being condemned by a judgment of the Parliament of Provence (9th February, 1657), the *Lettres Provinciales* were condemned by the Congregation of the Index, by a decree of September 6th of that year.[1]

What were the *Provinciales*? "We have been imposed upon. It was only yesterday that I was undeceived. . ." It was in this lively strain that the first letter began (IV, 119), and it set the tone for the entire work, in which Pascal, attaining perfection at one stroke, equalled or "surpassed both the ancients and the moderns,"[2] and gave permanent shape not only to the language, but to the French classical ideal. The method was that which he had sketched out in his fragment "*De l'esprit géométrique*."[3] He always substituted,

[1] VII, 229. During Pascal's lifetime there were three French editions of the *Provinciales* in existence, as well as a Latin edition.

[2] This was Boileau's opinion, as reported by Mme. de Sévigné, Jan. 15, 1690.

[3] IX, 244; 166-7. cf. Fourth *Provinciale* (IV, 250).

in his own mind, the definition for the thing defined; he kept it ever before him; and further, behind the definition he placed a concrete personality in flesh and blood, in such a way that the reader was no longer faced by mere abstractions, but by living beings. Following this method Pascal tried to demonstrate that all agree about actual things and dispute only about terms—proximate power,[1] sufficient grace,[2] for instance. "For the world is satisfied with mere words; there are very few who penetrate deeply into matters" (IV, 161). But was there only a wordy warfare in this case? It is debatable; Pascal for one was not long in recognizing the significance of the dispute. It is nevertheless true that most of the quarrels arising between men spring from the fact that they are disputing about things they do not understand, using specious or ambiguous terms, and thinking only of words.

"Grace," according to the author's friend, "demands pure and detached hearts, and itself purifies and detaches them from worldly interests incompatible with the truths of the Gospel" (IV, 174). This was what the Jesuits had forgotten, or else abandoned in favour of unworthy causes. Arnauld had been censured; "It is not M. Arnauld's sentiments that are heretical, but only his person. It is a case of personal heresy. . . These are the disputes of theologians, and not theology" (IV, 223). Moreover "nothing would be wanting to make this censure heretical. Truth is so delicate a matter that however short a space one withdraws from it, one falls into error, but this error is so subtle that even without going far from it one arrives at truth again" (IV, 215). This is indeed the well-known *Pensée 82*: "Justice and truth are two such subtle points that our instruments are too blunt to touch them accurately. If they reach the point they flatten it by their pressure all round it, which falls more often on the wrong spot than on the right." From this may be drawn a result which is of supreme importance, one that

---

[1] The theme of the first letter.

[2] The theme of the second letter (IV, 119, 156).

Pascal the controversialist had not yet clearly perceived—the essential need of the spirit of humility.

With the fourth letter, which treated of actual grace and the sins of ignorance (IV, 249-270), there came a loftier tone, and Pascal went straight to the very heart of the debate, starting to discuss the most profound and embarrassing question of ethics—that of responsibility. This letter is a masterpiece. No doubt in writing it Pascal borrowed largely from the "Apology for the Holy Fathers," but the phrasing and the thought are his, and his genius transformed all it touched.

Like the Molinists, M. Le Moine maintained that God gives to all men an *actual* sufficient grace, with the knowledge of evil and the inspiration that moves us to avoid it, without which our actions could not be imputed to us as sin. As Père Bauny put it, "to sin and become guilty in God's sight, we must know," or should have known,[1] "that the thing we desire to do is wrong"; God therefore, must give or have given this insight.

Arnauld and the Jansenists did not consider it true that all our sins are preceded by knowledge, and liberty to sin. Into how many sins do we not fall either through ignorance or habit or passion! And such acts are the greatest sins of all[2] for otherwise we should have to hold guiltless all who give themselves over to avarice, unchastity, blasphemy—in short, all hardened sinners. Therefore "sins committed without actual grace must be imputed nevertheless."[3]

Pascal points out to the priest the necessary consequences of his assertion: "I see that there are incomparably more persons justified by this ignorance and forgetfulness of God than by grace and by the sacraments... What a great benefit, Father, this will be to some of my acquaintances! I must bring them to hear you. Perhaps you have scarcely ever seen people with fewer sins to their account, for they never think of God; vice has prejudiced their reason . . . so that, according to M. Le Moine, they are still in a state of baptismal innocence. . . These out-and-out sinners . . . have cheated the devil through their devotion to him" (IV, 253-56). But, replies the worthy priest, these irreligious persons of whom you speak would be without sin if they had never had any thought or desire of being converted, for "we maintain that all have some ideas of the kind, and that God never lets any man sin without having shown him beforehand the wrong he is about to do." "No," replies Pascal: "There are thousands of people who never have such desires, who sin without remorse, who sin joyfully, and are proud of the fact.. It is not a question of faith here, or even of reasoning; it is a matter of *fact*. We see it, know it, feel it." Even the just, "frequently fall into sudden sin without their perceiving it"; there are some for whom concupiscence spreads "secret snares," who in debate are carried away by "feelings of bitterness through their own interests," while believing they are acting "solely in the interests of the truth"; there are others who "resort enthusiastically to things that are really evil because they believe them really good." Such people sin without always having "actual grace in all the occasions on which they sin." They sin because there is only the ignorance of the *fact* and the special circumstances (as for instance, killing a person by showing him an instrument of death), but not the ignorance of the *law*, that is, of good and evil, which may excuse an action by making it involuntary."[1]

---

[1] This double correction is necessary if we are to accept the thought in the minds of Père Bauny and the doctors of the Sorbonne, who seem, wrongly, to be demanding that there shall be *actual* knowledge, in order for it to be sin.

[2] Here the Jansenists were too arbitrary. It is a fault (1) when the ignorance is voluntary or desired (this is even a "sin of cunning"); (2) when it can be overcome, that is, when one ought to know, and does not know for want of having studied the matter. Such was St. Paul's ignorance (*I Tim.* I, 13-15. cf. *Lk.* XII, 47). But if the ignorance is invincible there is no sin.

[3] This Jansenist conclusion goes beyond the premisses, for there might be sufficient grace, though not used. The Jansenists, regarding all grace as irresistible, could not contemplate this view, or even admit it.

---

[1] IV, 257-267. Pascal is right as regards the "*primary law*," i.e. for the primitive, necessary duties, of which none are supposed ignorant, and for which ignorance is no excuse. But when it concerns matters remote from the law, the question is a doubtful one, since the most enlightened consciences still dispute it.

"The Father seemed surprised at this, and at the quotation from Aristotle even more than at the one from St. Augustine.[1] But while he was meditating on what he should say, someone came to tell him that Mme. la maréchale de . . . and Mme. la marquise de . . . were asking for him. And thus hastily leaving us, he said: I will talk to our Fathers about this; they will certainly find the right answer, for we have some very subtle reasoners among them."

Here we have a vivid example of the Pascalian manner, and we see too how, enlarging the scope of the debate, he went to the very root of things. The question in dispute was that of responsibility and its conditions. The one party—the doctors of the Sorbonne—considered us responsible for our voluntary acts alone; the other—the Jansenists—made us out guilty in all our natural acts, because our nature is corrupt. Pascal did not go so far as the Jansenists, for, regarding the question as a scientist, he refused to admit that there may be personal guilt without responsibility; he knew that many things that we believe "natural" to us are not so, and may be perhaps but a "first custom," for which we cannot be accounted responsible (*93*). But on the other hand he refused to see merit and demerit in single voluntary acts, preceded by actual knowledge;[2] he could not make up his mind to separate merit and demerit from the very basis of our personality, of which we are partly the authors, because in our nature there are many elements due not to our origin, but to our actions; such as habits, and vincible ignorance, which results from our negligence in seeking knowledge. In these cases, man is guilty of wrongdoing as to cause, because he is responsible for the cause. Such was Pascal's view, and there is little doubt that he was right, but the question is infinite in its complexity, and admits of so many delicate differences that even our most profound analysis remains unable to unravel syntheses of this kind.

---

[1] The texts cited in opposition are derived, one from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 1, 1110, the other from the *Retractiones*, I, xvi.

[2] "To Pascal, the soul is the essential consideration and our actions derive their moral significance from those depths of our soul to which consciousness sometimes cannot attain" (Boutroux, *op. cit.* p, 121). Let us go further. It is in his conformity or non-conformity with the law, as the agent knows it, that the morality of the action lies, whether this be good or bad. But from the depths of the being, as from a spring, human action tends to derive its moral quality, for we tend to act as we are constituted. Now it is to be doubted whether we have a clear consciousness of the depths of our being; but liberty in the normal man can and must always maintain order throughout, so that to a certain extent we *are* responsible even for acts proceeding from these depths unknown to us.

With the fifth *Provinciale* there was a change of front. Pascal abandoned the theological question proper for the community life, and directly attacked the Society of Jesus, in order that he might tear the mask from its religion, placed at the service of politics, and its ethics, degraded to casuistry. Then began those terrible letters, marvels of wit, spirit, acute sarcasm and acrimonious eloquence which finally assured the triumph of the *Provinciales*, and created an effect from which the Jesuits found it somewhat difficult to recover —incomparable masterpieces of our language, truly, but in substance not wholly beyond criticism.

This is how Pascal introduced his casuist:

> "It was an old acquaintance of mine whom I desired to meet again for this express purpose, and as I had been told how to treat these people, I had no difficulty in starting him off. He greeted me very affectionately, for he still loves me, and after some talk on trivialities, I took the opportunity of the present season to hear something from him about fasting, so that we might slip into other matters unconsciously. I told him that I found it very difficult to fast, and he exhorted me to put pressure on myself, but as I still continued to complain he was sympathetic, and began to seek for some reason why I should be dispensed from it. He did in fact suggest several that did not suit me, and then finally bethought him to ask if I did not find it very difficult to sleep without having had supper. 'Yes indeed, Father,' I said 'and that often obliges me to have a light repast at noon, and to sup well at night.' 'I

am very glad,' said he, 'to have found a means of giving you relief without sin: after all, you are not obliged to fast. You are not bound to believe it on my mere assertion; come into the library.' I followed him, and there, taking up a book, 'Here,' said he, 'is the proof of it, and God knows how valuable a proof it is. This is Escobar.' 'Who is Escobar, Father?' 'What? you do not know who Escobar is? A member of our Order who compiled this moral theology, from twenty-four of our Fathers, and in his preface compares this book with the one in the Apocalypse which was sealed with seven seals.[1] And he says that "Jesus offers it, thus sealed, to the four beasts Suarez, Vasquez, Molina, Valentia, in presence of the twenty-four Jesuits who represent the twenty-four elders".' He read me the whole allegory . . . then, having found the passage dealing with fasting, 'Here it is,' said he. ' "Is he who cannot sleep if he has not supped obliged to fast? Certainly not." Are you not satisfied?' 'Not altogether,' I told him, 'for I can manage the fast if I lunch in the morning and sup well at night.' 'Well, see what follows,' said he, 'they have thought of everything: "And what is to be said, if he can do without lunch at midday by supping at night?" '—'That is my case,' I interposed—' "He is still not obliged to fast, for no-one is obliged to change the order of his mealtimes." ' 'Oh, what a good idea!' said I. . . 'You have a worthy man in Escobar.' 'Everybody loves him,' replied the Father; 'he raises such interesting points' " (IV, 304-307).

The worthy priest, put into the way of it by such a good start, and with a good nature, eagerness, and appositeness that were unwearied, furnished all the citations asked of him, which clearly proved that the Order was not unworthy of its reputation, that it had an answer and an excuse for everything, that it accommodated itself to all conditions and all persons, being austere with those who might complain of its laxity, and lax with the large number of those who sought for laxity, and all this, thanks to its theory of *probabilism*, the A B C of all its morality, which directed that any opinion, provided that it had been maintained by some doctor in authority, could be conscientiously adopted. Thus the good Father innocently played into his adversary's hands, just when the latter, stopping the game and unmasking his batteries, was preparing to fall upon him harshly and violently.

---

[1] The frontispiece of the *Liber Theologiæ moralis* by Father Escobar y Mendoza, a Spanish Jesuit, will be found reproduced in the *Grands Ecrivains* (IV, 286).

For instance,[1] "Is a man fatigued by something, such as dalliance with a woman (*ad insequendam amicam*), obliged to fast? Certainly not." Not that the casuist excused the bad action, whether murder or debauch, which is quite clearly sin, for he said so, and Pascal ought to have repeated his words. But it is quite true that the casuist dispensed the murderer or the debauchee from fasting, and some even dispensed him if he had acted thus in order to excuse himself from fasting!

Moreover,[2] the authority of the Gospel, the Councils, and the Popes was evaded by the interpretation given to certain terms. In the precept "Give alms of your abundance," the word "abundance" was interpreted as "superfluity" in such a way as to show that nobody has any (V, 30). If the terms employed were too definite, the writer fell back upon "favouring circumstances." And as a last resource there was always the doctrine of "probable opinions," so that one single casuist, sufficing to render an opinion "probable," might dispose at his own pleasure of all matters relating to Church government. "Mankind is so corrupt nowadays that since we cannot make them come to us, we must go to meet them." The only difficulty was to find any probability in the antithesis of opinions which were manifestly right. "And it is only our great men who can do this" (V, 35-42).

There was also[3] "the method of *directing the intention*, which is," added the casuist, "of such importance in our moral theology, that I can almost compare it with probabilism. . . When we cannot prevent the action, we purify at any rate the intention, and thus we rectify the vicious act by the purity of the intention. In this way our Fathers [found themselves able to permit homicide in a duel], for we have but to turn a man's mind away from the desire for vengeance, which is criminal, to direct it to the desire to defend his honour, which our Fathers allow. And thus it is that they fulfil all their duties towards God and man, for they content the world by permitting what it wants, and they satisfy the claims of the Gospel, by purifying the intentions" (V, 87).

---

[1] IV, 307. cf. IV, 291, and Strowski, III, 98-102.

[2] Sixth *Provinciale* (V, 28-51).

[3] Seventh *Provinciale*, which attained great fame, and was considered by Boileau (VII, 63) the best of all.

On many different occasions Pascal reverted to this question of homicide,[1] as to that of usury,[2] so that he might thoroughly unmask the impostures of the casuists. It did not help them, he said (VI,27) to differentiate between supposition and practice, for there is such a close connection between the two that it is very easy to pass from one to the other, and to allow in practice what has been regarded as probable in supposition.

Besides this[3] how many methods had the Fathers devised to render devotion easy; to permit Christians to work out their salvation without any trouble; to feel at ease in their licentiousness; to evade the truth, by practising mental reservations, and the love of God and the necessity of a change of heart, by a very mild form of penitence! It is over this last point that Pascal exploded in wrath, demonstrating to the casuist that his licence went "as far as to subvert God's law entirely," since it amounted to suppressing the scandal of the Cross, and rendering the sacrifice of Christ of no account.[4]

The Jesuits accused Montalte of "making a jest of holy things"[1] and this not without some foundation, for in attacking the casuists' laxity of morals, Pascal had to some extent mishandled religion itself. But such a result was certainly very far from his thoughts, and his protest was quite sincere:

---

[1] Thirteenth and fourteenth *Provinciales* (VI, 19-43; 130-156).

[2] Eighth *Provinciale* (V, 135-159). The twelfth deals with simony (V, 361-387).

[3] Ninth and tenth *Provinciales* (V, 191-214; 249-275).

[4] Tenth *Provinciale* (V, 273). cf, the fifth (IV, 301, 304), and *Pensées 245, 588,* with *I Cor.* I, 17: "lest the cross of Christ should be made void."

> "In truth, Fathers, there is a vast difference between scoffing at religion and scoffing at those who profane it by their extravagant opinions. It would be impiety to fail in respect for the truths revealed by the Holy Spirit, but it would be impiety of another sort to fail in contempt for the falsities man's mind opposes to them.
>
> For since you oblige me to enter upon this discussion, Fathers, I entreat you to consider that, just as Christian truths are worthy of love and respect, the errors which oppose them merit hatred and contempt; for just as there are two things in the truths of our religion—a divine beauty which renders them lovable, and a sacred majesty which renders them venerable—so there are two things in these errors—an impiety which renders them abhorrent, and an impertinence which makes them ridiculous. And this is why the saints have always felt both love and fear for the truth, and their righteousness is entirely composed of fear, which is its beginning, and love, which is its end. For error the saints have always had feelings of hatred and contempt, and their zeal is equally directed towards strenuously rebutting the cunning of the wicked and turning into ridicule their errors and their extravagances" (V, 309-310).

Upon this matter Pascal's good faith cannot be doubted, and the same is true in what concerns the correctness and exactitude of his quotations: "I can declare before God," writes Pascal,[2] "that there is nothing I consider more detestable than to injure truth in even the smallest particular, and I have always taken very special care, not only not to prevaricate, which would be terrible, but also not to alter or twist the meaning of a passage in the slightest degree." Yet more, he constantly tried, throughout these polemics, to observe the "spirit of charity" which is, he says (V, 324), the beginning and end of all things, and which should make us seek, not a personal triumph, but the conversion of others —not self, but truth.

---

[1] Eleventh *Provinciale* (V, 307-333).

[2] Eleventh *Provinciale* (V, 322). It was admitted by all that Pascal was distinguished by "a particular love of truth" (Du Fossé, *op. cit.* p. 151. cf. what Père Rapin says about him; Appendix V).

Pascal had read Escobar very closely, and the quotations he derived from him, like those taken from Arnauld, are in strict conformity with the originals. Certain summaries which Pascal substituted for the original text have been regarded as tendentious, but it is from Escobar that he took them, and Escobar cannot be suspected of prejudice against the Jesuits. There are, we may say, about a dozen passages[1] at the outside, in which for the purpose of polemics, and most frequently in following Arnauld, Pascal was led to isolate certain texts in a somewhat arbitrary manner; to throw too strong a light on certain principles which in the original were more finely shaded; and to force slightly the meaning of the author he is quoting and endow him with intentions that are not his. This was inevitable in the circumstances, and we cannot blame Pascal for it, especially since these involuntary mistakes do not in any way alter or weaken the significance of his argumentation.

Pascal has been reproached with something more serious—with having examined and pilloried, among all the opinions of the casuists, only the scandalous ones, leaving out all the others. This reproach is to some extent well-founded, for serious probabilists have never admitted that any opinion may be accepted and followed on the authority of a single doctor of theology.[1] In reality, Pascal's argumentation was not against *probabilism*, but against *laxity*. In making mistakes about the identity of persons or of doctrines, he made no mistake about the existent evil, for these surface Christians, of whom there were so many in France just after the Fronde, could, and indeed did, abuse the facilities which certain lax casuists gave them. "They strike at the very heart of piety: they take away the spirit that giveth life; they say that the love of God is not necessary to salvation" (V, 274). In denouncing such abuses Pascal was entirely in the right.

---

[1] Here are the chief incomplete, or erroneous, quotations given by Pascal in the Letters. 1 (IV, 266), Bauny's remarks on the conditions of sin, stopped short at a comma; 2 (IV, 313), Layman's sentence on probabilism, taken out of its context; 3 (V, 34), Diana, on the respective authority of the Popes and the Fathers of the Order, begun at a comma; 4 (V, 89 and 90), Hurtado, on the duel, wrong reference, and omission of a phrase at the end; 5 (V, 197), Le Moyne, on the pious man, extracts distorting the whole; 6 (V, 207, 208), two from Bauny, on the liberties tolerated, and on the reparation due to the father of a girl who has been seduced; and 7 (V, 256-7), a text from Filliucius, on the disposition required of a penitent, where the meaning has been distorted; 8 (V, 270), Antoine Sirmond, on the love of God, phrases detached from their context; 9 (V, 272), Pinthereau, on the same subject, wrong and forced interpretation; 10 (V, 367) Vasquez, mistranslation, which gives the passage an improper meaning. Here we have about a dozen quotations that may be taxed with incorrectness (for which Arnauld is in great measure responsible) without any alteration in the significance of the reasoning they support.

But at this point we must draw a distinction of supreme significance, for the method pursued by Pascal calls here for certain reservations.

Every institution, like every doctrine, not excepting truth itself, degenerates when handled by man, unless there be special succour vouchsafed by God, for the human mind is easily, if not naturally, prone to extremes, and the human will cannot as a rule abide in "the happy mean and the perfect temper" (II, 210) in which virtue, like truth, dwells. In the hands of man authority tends to become tyranny, liberty license, and these two extremes unite in anarchy and despotism, the wedded forms of human absolutism. Is tyranny, however, a sufficient reason for rejecting authority? Does licence authorize us to condemn liberty? Not so; it is the abuse that must be proscribed, and the use retained.

---

[1] The *equi-probabilism* introduced by St. Alphonso de Liguori asserts that when the reasons for and against the obligations of the law are almost equal man is permitted a choice. If the opinion is unfavourable to the law, the *probabilism* of the Jesuits allows them to follow it, provided that it is extremely probable; the *probabiliorism* of the Dominicans does not permit this unless it is more probable than the contrary course, These various forms of "probabilism" are all received in the Church, which has condemned only the opposite excesses of *tutiorism* and of *laxity*.

But man is so constituted that most frequently he rejects the use together with the abuse, and moves from one extreme to the other, from Tsarism to Bolshevism and from Bolshevism to a tyranny worse than that of the Tsars, without ever remaining in a well balanced position. The history of humanity is almost wholly made up of a similar series of revolutions, marking the incessant oscillation of the human mind between the two extremes in which all its disasters are collected.

Now Pascal, who was to comprehend and so admirably set forth this fundamental principle of knowledge and of action, either had not yet recognized it, when he was writing the *Provinciales*, or else did not apply it to his subject. He was certainly not wrong in attacking the abuse of casuistry, but he was wrong in condemning its use with its abuse, in not sufficiently discerning the true principle of which probabilism is the distortion, and in rejecting casuistry entirely because it might have "pernicious results." Considered from that point of view, what human doctrine is there that would escape censure?

Casuistry, like jurisprudence, is assuredly dangerous in that it lends itself to abuses, and frequently enables people to circumvent or to evade the law; but it is nevertheless indispensable in that it allows "the truth that never changes"[1] to be adapted to the changing circumstances of the times. Note, for instance, how, in the industrial development of these latter years, jurisprudence, by its interpretation of Article 1384 of our Civil Code, and especially of one little phrase concerning responsibility "for the things of which one is in charge," has allowed responsibility to be extended to cases in which there is, properly speaking, no misdemeanour at all. This jurisprudence, now safeguarded by the law concerning accidents arising out of work, is like all jurisprudence, only the effort to make right accord with equity. The maintenance of right is thus a sort of give-and-take between the law, either written or as habitually practised,

[1] Twelfth *Provinciale* (V. 368).

and jurisprudence, which adapts the law to practice, to be in its turn safeguarded by a law upon which jurisprudence will again set to work under the invisible influence of *equity*.

Now Escobar is a lawyer, anxious to adapt law to practice and in this matter to reconcile the Church with the age, retaining under the Christian law certain souls, not all of the highest rank. His merits and his defects are such as are common to all lawyers, but the latter must not lead us to overlook the former, or we may be attacking the religious institution of the direction of men's consciences itself, of which casuistry is a necessary corollary. This certainly was not Pascal's intention. The excesses into which casuistry lapsed were due to the very excesses of the juridical mind, and by no means (as Pascal and Port Royal seemed to believe), to a kind of machination of the Jesuits for the purpose of establishing their domination everywhere. The casuists and the Spanish theologians were no more deserving of discredit than the Roman or English lawyers in their attempt to "reconcile the respect for the old national rights with the needs arising out of a new situation. In this sense Jansenist rigidity is an unsound argument, and the complaisant casuists are in the right. They do what must be done to establish harmony, as far as the fundamental data permit of it, between progress—the forward movement, if you like—and tradition, and to avoid an abrupt reform or an explicit abrogation which would be the abandonment of principle and the beginning of revolution".[1]

This stated, and this important correction once admitted, the *Provinciales*, if taken as a condemnation of abuse and not of use, are still a noteworthy and successful attempt to put men's consciences on their guard against laxity, to remind them of the integrity of the moral obligation, the purity of the Christian life, and the paramount importance of not taking the decisions of casuistry for rules of universal

[1] Cournot, *Considérations sur la marche des idées dans les temps modernes*, Paris, 1872, I, pp. 366-7.

ethics.[1] The intention may justify or excuse a man, but it is not enough to excuse an act. For this reason we must "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling";[2] and this too is why every one *must* make constantly renewed effort to watch and examine closely his moral life that it may conform with the law.[3] This makes very stern demands upon us, yet, although one cannot *demand* more than the law, although one can only *exhort* the soul to exceed it, experience proves it true that the soul, unless it is constantly striving to improve itself, goes back; if it does not progress, it declines; if it does not seek to approach ever closer to the moral ideal that it may realise the Divine love in its fulness, it risks falling back into laxity, becoming atrophied, and decaying. *Non progredi regredi est;* and we are told too, that it is a narrow way that leads to eternal life.[4] Pascal was right in his assertion of these great truths, and through this the *Provinciales* have had a salutary and a lasting effect. From this point of view they retain all their value.[4]

Moreover, Pascal's remarkable mind, always in search of truth and always advancing toward it, was not long in arriving at the intricate sphere of ethics, as it had arrived at the simpler sphere of science. A year had scarcely elapsed before he amended and reformed what there was erroneous in his thesis and freed himself from the Jansenist idea.[6]

---

[1] *Factum pour les curés de Paris*, 1658 (attributed to Pascal): "The most pernicious thing about these new moral codes is that they tend not only to corrupt manners and customs, but to corrupt the law that regulates them, a thing which is of considerable importance from yet another standpoint. For it is a much less dangerous and less general evil to introduce disorders while leaving in existence the laws which forbid them than to pervert the laws to justify the disorders (VII, 279).

[2] *Phil.* II, 12.

[3] *Mt.* XIX, 17, 21 and St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ* II, II, q. 184. a.3.

[4] *Mt.* VII, 14.

[5] On this subject see A. Degert on the reaction of the *Provinciales* on moral theology in France. (*Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique de Toulouse*, 1913, p. 401, and the conclusion.)

[6] Seventeenth and eighteenth *Provinciales* (VI, 340-373; VII 23-58). Doubtless he is still trying to justify the Jansenist idea, but what he is actually justifying is not Jansenism but Thomism. According to Janssens' correct estimate, *op. cit.* p. 329, in all good faith he attributes to the Jansenists his own sentiments, which are Catholic. This is the reason why he is neither equivocal

His polemics, undertaken in the "spirit of charity" he had adopted as his rule, his readings,[1] and no doubt, too, the influence of Nicole,[2] led him to discover Thomism and its truth. St. Thomas revealed to him a twofold principle of supreme importance:

1. The existence of a sufficient grace which God refuses to none, and the power of human liberty to co-operate with, or resist, this grace;

2. The nature of the Divine action, which sets the human will to work freely, by a causality, not constraining but liberating, which transfers the "dignity of causality" to the secondary cause, and acts in us "without the infallibility of God's operation in any way impairing man's natural liberty."[3] This, says Pascal, is what St. Augustine so wonderfully elucidated in his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, by his theory of delectation. "God effects a change in the heart of man by the heavenly sweetness He diffuses there," which surpasses all carnal pleasures, so

---

in interpreting Jansenius in the Thomist sense, nor ambiguous in submitting to the Pope on the question of *right* and condemning with him the five propositions, while reserving his opinion as to the *fact* of their being found in Jansenius. "Catholics as to the faith, reasonable as to the fact, and innocent in both"; such thinkers, according to Pascal (VII, 55), reconcile the demands of reason with the duties of the believer. Here you have the very delicate question of the *dogmatic fact* which we shall have to consider later. (App. V.)

[1] From this period, apparently, date his *Écrits sur la grâce* (XI, 128-295) Pascal read St. Augustine and his commentators (XI, 104), St. Thomas Aquinas, and the records of the Council of Trent.

[2] In the *Traité de la grâce naturelle*, written in 1691 and published in 1715, Nicole says that his ideas on grace came to him about 1656, and that he communicated them to Pascal, who approved them. He even adds, on the subject of this toning down of St. Augustine's doctrine: "The late M. Pascal, with whom I had the good fortune to be very closely associated, helped not a little in fostering this inclination in me."

[3] *Pensées, 513*. Eighteenth *Provinciale* (VII, 28-9). cf. the concluding words of the *Écrits sur la grâce* (XI, 295): "From this pure doctrine let us learn to unite together in defending the power of human nature against the followers of Luther, and the powerlessness of human nature against the Pelagians, the force that lies in grace against the Lutherans, and the necessity of grace against the Pelagians, without destroying free will by grace, like the former, and destroying grace by free will, like the latter. And do not let us think that to have arrived at the truth it suffices to shun one of these errors only." On the important theory that there are various kinds of causality, and Pascal's idea of the nature of Divine causality, cf. the introduction by Brunschvicg, Vol. IV, pp. lii-lvii.

that man, "finding his highest joy in the God who thus charms him, cannot fail to incline towards Him by a movement of his own, quite free, voluntary, tender . . . since the will does not turn to anything but that which pleases it most, and nothing can please it so much as this Only Good, which comprises within it all other benefits." "It is in this way that God disposes of man's free will without imposing any constraint upon him, and that the free choice which can always resist grace, but which does not always wish to do so, is directed to God as freely as it is inevitably, when He desires to attract it by the sweetness of His effective inspiration" (VII, 29-30).

Pascal realized that *the whole truth is formed from the union of the contraries*, the power of grace upon the will, and the power of the will to resist grace; and that Calvin's error, like that of the Pelagians,[1] was to sacrifice one of these terms to the other in order to satisfy the law of contradiction. But the truth is to be found in a higher order, in unattainable knowledge, in which the contrary truths, without being identified, are yet reconciled and blended in the bosom of the whole body of truth, so that we should be "just as jealous of the one truth as of the other" (VII, 28). The proper rôle of reason is to raise itself to this higher plane or order, which is the order of Truth.[2]

In rising to this order reason no doubt, comes into collision with mystery—"the mystery why, in the case of two righteous persons, God gives perseverance to the one and not to the other" (XI, 238); a mystery still, and one that is "inconceivable" to our minds, the concurrence of Almighty grace and human liberty. But *all that is incomprehensible does not cease to be, for all that.* Pascal as a physicist knew this; he had submitted to experience, however incomprehensible its results, and by so doing had given science its true foundation. Pascal as a Christian realized it; he subjected his reason to the truth which transcended it; freeing it thus, at the same time he set free his will.

---

[1] Pascal says: "of Molina" (VII, 28), which is not entirely correct. In his *Écrits sur la grâce* (XI, 138-9) he gives a very temperate criticism of the Molinists, whose "submission" he contrasts with the Calvinist "rebellion."

[2] On this point, of capital importance to Pascal's thought, see, with the Eighteenth *Provinciale*, the letter to Le Pailleur (II, 210), the fifth *Écrit des curés de Paris* (VII, 361), the *Écrits sur la grâce* (XI, 139) and *Pensées 394, 567, 684, 862* (App. II), 863, 865.

Truth alone sets man free. It is at the very moment when man realizes the limits of his reason and the powerlessness of his will that he grasps the significance of the one and the force of the other, and really dominates them. What joy then is his, after all his torment! He has abandoned facile and ephemeral triumphs for conquests that are difficult but lasting; he has quitted the artificial world of human conceptions, too easily swayed at his command, too frail and pliable, for the substantial world of realities which both *resist* and *stimulate* him—a proof that they are not of his fabrication, but are due to One greater than he.

Henceforth Pascal was in possession of his guiding principle, and the *Pensées* are its result. And he now had his rule of life—humility and confidence, fear and hope. In His Passion Jesus, he tells us, willed to give us "a signal example of both, in St. Peter's desertion through lack of grace and in the conversion of the dying thief by the marvellous effect of grace. It is thus that men should humble themselves beneath the hand of God, and say with David: Lord, I am poor and needy" (Ps. lxxxvi, 1).[1]

---

[1] *Écrits sur la grâce* (XI, 241). This passage, in its expressions still tinged with Jansenism, may be compared with the following *Pensées*: "There is no doctrine more proper to man than that which instructs him about his twofold power of receiving and of forfeiting grace, on account of the double danger to which he is always exposed, the danger of despair and the danger of pride." (*529*). "A man said to me one day that when he came from confession he felt great joy and confidence. Another said to me that he remained fearful, whereupon I thought that these two together would make one good man, and that each was so far lacking in not having the feelings of the other. The same is often true in other matters" (*530*).

# V

## PASCAL'S LATER YEARS
## HIS MATHEMATICAL DISCOVERIES
## HIS DEFENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

In the preceding pages we have essayed to bring into relief the significance, value and bearing of the *Provinciales*; we have brought to light the principle underlying Pascal's criticism; we have shown the justice of such criticism, and also its limitations. Let us now briefly recall the conclusions at which we have arrived in this matter.

Pascal attacked the casuistry of the Jesuits. He was right in denouncing its abuses, but he was wrong in not distinguishing clearly enough between use and abuse, for, as we have observed, man's almost inevitable abuse of authority or liberty or the right of ownership is not a sufficient reason for condemning any of these. Now it is very certain that in the guidance of men's consciences casuistry is necessary, (just as for the application of legal rules jurisprudence is necessary), and therefore its use cannot be proscribed without attacking institutional religion itself. This was our first conclusion. We added, however, that bearing this reservation in mind, the *Provinciales* are of supreme value. As long as we do not fall into the Jansenist extreme which condemns without hope those who do not follow the Perfect Way, as long as we admit that the progress towards perfection may be a gradual one—and we saw that on this point Pascal singularly tempers the harshness of the Jansenist attitude—it is a good thing, an excellent thing, to recall to men's minds the sight of perfection, and to remind them that "narrow is the way that leadeth unto life." His is a somewhat austere code of morality, we may say, and this is true; but we must remember that human nature does not naturally incline to austerity, and our natural inclinations if need be, can easily bear the burden of setting things right, and re-establishing the balance. There is therefore no great danger in preaching austerity to men, while there would be serious disadvantages if we were to inculcate an accommodating morality, since their nature is only too much inclined in that direction. "The example of Alexander's chastity has not made so many persons continent as that of his drunkenness has made intemperate" (*103*). In this way, as Émile Boutroux[1] has clearly shown, the *asceticism* which is such an essential part of Pascal's doctrine is justified. "To reject it entirely would be to maintain that all the elements of our human nature have an equal right to existence and to development," bad as well as good, and to that I would add, that as human nature is being constantly drawn to the lower elements, it would not only ruin the order and the hierarchy of our tendencies, but sacrifice the loftier to the baser ones. We know that in a garden where everything is allowed to grow wild the weeds soon overrun the valuable plants.

So much for morals: now for the principles that govern them. We have seen that in this difficult question, one that the human intelligence cannot solve, Christianity affirms and maintains both the power of *grace* and that of *liberty*. We have seen that Pascal, inclined by his Jansenist instructors to the side of grace, came back, through the force of his own genius (which is only good sense magnified), to equilibrium, to the mean in which the truth lies. He proclaimed the essential principle, formed from the union of two contraries in a higher order, that God actuates the will *infallibly*, yet *freely*, and in the principle of *this* truth he grasped the principle of *all* truth. His inner experience had come to animate his doctrine, as the doctrine itself had enlightened and completed his experience. He knew that on the one hand "to detach the soul from love of the world and withdraw it from all it holds most dear, to make it dead to itself, to bear it to God that it may attach itself solely and unceasingly to Him, this can be the work of an Almighty hand alone"[1] : this is the work of grace. But he knew too,—and this is the work of liberty—that man must be prepared for grace, that he must "open his mind to proofs and confirm his position by habit, yet humbly offer himself to the inspirations which alone can have a true and salutary effect" (*245*). He comprehended the mysterious union of the Divine action and the human action; he knew that one cannot love God without being loved by Him, and that, since God created man for a supernatural state, if man does what he can, God will not fail to give him all that he needs to attain his end.

---

[1] *op. cit.*, p. 204.

Moreover, while the battle of the *Provinciales* was going on, various events were happening which exercised a powerful influence on Pascal's heart and mind, and contributed to his enlightenment.

On March 24th, 1656,[2] his niece Marguerite Périer was cured of a lachrymal ulcer, from which she had suffered for three years and a half, by touching a fragment from Our Lord's Crown of Thorns at Port Royal in Paris. This miracle, attested by several physicians and surgeons of repute, authenticated by a solemn pronouncement of the Church, and followed by several other cures, touched Pascal very profoundly and filled him with joy. From that date he changed his device for a new one—a firmament, surrounded by a crown of thorns,[3] with the motto: *Scio cui credidi*. Lastly, this event was the occasion—as it was bound to be with a mind such as his—for a whole series of reflections and meditations, at the end of which he arrived at these "sensible" conclusions:[1] that the reality of miracles establishes the fact "that there is something superior to nature," that it is possible to discern them by the rules of common sense, that these rules are verified by the miracles recounted in the Old and New Testaments, and that they prove the existence of God and His Messias in so clear a way that they cannot be denied "without offending the commonest theories" of certainty. He consulted M. de Barcos, Saint-Cyran's nephew,[2] about the definition, significance and bearing of miracles, and enunciated the following vigorous conclusion: "Miracles are the test in doubtful matters, between Jew and Gentile, Jew and Christian, Catholic and heretic, slandered and slanderers, between the two crosses" (*841*). And again: "The two foundations, the one from within, the other external—grace, miracles, both supernatural" (*805*). "Both miracles and the truth are necessary, since man must be convinced both in body and soul" (*806*). "I should not be a Christian, were it not for the miracles, said St. Augustine" (*812*). Moreover, that we must believe in a miraculous *fact*, once it is well-founded, even though it exceeds the power of reason, was well known to Pascal, in whose mind the fundamental thought was this: submission of the reason to the fact.

---

[1] Fifth *Provinciale* (IV, 304).

[2] For the miracle of the Holy Thorn, see Mme Périer (I, 73; 17); two letters from Jacqueline (IV, 327, 332) and various other accounts of the occurrence (IV, 336 *et seq.*).

[3] It is currently stated, after Sainte-Beuve, "an eye surrounded by a crown of thorns," but that is the Périer device (IV, 353, and illustration).

The miracle of the Holy Thorn had confirmed Pascal's faith and increased his apostolic zeal; he saw in it a sign from on high and a token of the mission for which God destined him. Circumstances now favoured his design of testifying his gratitude to God.[3]

Mlle. de Roannez, the sister of his friend, was an apparently light-minded and frivolous girl. While ending a novena at Port Royal in presence of the Holy Thorn, on 4th August, 1656, she was filled with compunction, and resolved to embrace the religious life. She discussed her intention with M. Singlin; then, from Poitou, whither her brother had taken her, she began a steady correspondence with Pascal on the subject. Of the letters addressed to her by Pascal we have a few fragments only,[1] but these are admirable, clearly revealing this soul both in its ardour and its discernment, the passion of its devotion, as well as that perspicacity which enabled it to descry in souls, as in facts, the hidden order which none other perceived, but which all were forced to recognize when he had laid it bare.

---

[1] I, 74; 18. cf. the *Discours* by Filleau de la Chaise, summing up Pascal's own exposition of his views (XII, ccxvii).

[2] For the questions which Pascal propounded to him see XIV, 293 *et seq.*

[3] "There are so few of us to whom God shows Himself by these unusual methods that we ought indeed to profit by the opportunities when offered, for He does not emerge from the mystery of nature that envelops Him except to inspire our faith to serve Him all the more zealously for the greater certitude with which we know Him" (Fourth letter to Mlle de Roannez, VI, 87; 214). "*On the Miracle.* Since God has made no family more happy, He should find none more grateful" (*856*). cf. Boutroux, *op. cit.*, p. 138; Strowski, III, p. 143 *et seq.*

Mlle. de Roannez was greatly troubled at the thought of renouncing the world. "I do not know by experience,"[2] wrote Pascal, "what the beginning of this grief may mean; but I know quite well that there must be a pang in every soul that seeks to destroy the old Adam on turning to God, for in order to give place to the new heavens, the whole universe must be destroyed. We should not discuss the question whether we have a vocation to quit the world, but rather whether we are justified in remaining in it, just as we should not stop to take advice before deciding to leave a house that is plague-stricken. Most certainly[3] no one can ever get free without a pang. We do not feel the bond so long as we voluntarily follow that which carries us away, but when we begin to resist it or to move in another direction we suffer sorely. We must make up our minds to that warfare which seems hard to mankind, but which is peace in God's eyes. We must endeavour[4] not to be troubled about anything, but to regard all that happens as for the best.

---

[1] Classified and dated by Ch. Adam, in his "Pascal et Mlle de Roannez" *Revue bourguignonne de l'enseignement supérieur*, 1891, although the dates of the various letters are actually at greater distances than he believes (Strowski, III, p. 145).

[2] *First letter* to Mlle de Roannez, Sept., 1656 (V, 405; 209).

[3] *Second letter* (V, 409; 211).

[4] *Third letter* (VI, 83; 212).

Our God is one who conceals Himself;[1] if He were continually to reveal Himself to man, there would be no merit in believing in Him, and on the other hand, if He never showed Himself, there would be little faith in the world. But as a rule He hides Himself from our sight and on rare occasions reveals Himself to those whom He desires to make His servants. He remained hidden beneath the veil of nature which conceals Him from us until the Incarnation, and when the time came at which He was to appear, He was yet more concealed by His human form; so finally He chose to dwell with men in the most mysterious of disguises, the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist. Those who stop short at the literal meaning, the appearance, the symbol, seeing natural effects, attribute them to nature, without thinking that they may have another author, and this they do with Our Lord, with the Eucharistic species, whereas: "All things conceal some mystery, all are veils which hide God from us. Christians ought to recognize Him in them all. Temporal afflictions conceal the eternal joys to which they lead, and temporal joys conceal the everlasting evils which they cause. Let us pray that God may make us recognize and serve Him in all things. . . " (VI, 89-90; 215). Moreover,[2] we must not believe that the Christian life is a life of sadness. We relinquish the pleasures of this world only to find greater joys in embracing the cross of Christ. Is any delight to be compared with that of being united to God? "It is certain that the favours God bestows upon us here are the measure of the glory He reserves for us in the world to come."[3] "For there is an ever-flowing tide of grace, which the Scriptures compare to a river, and to the light that the sun sheds always around, light that is always renewed, for if the sun ceased to radiate it even for a moment, all that had already been received would disappear and we should remain in darkness."[15] Such is the Christian life; those who are of the world do not possess the joy "that the world cannot give or take away";[16] the blessed possess this joy unmixed with sadness; Christians on earth have some sadness mingled with their joy, but at any rate "both these things are necessary to our sanctification—pain and pleasure" (VI, 219; 220). Let us try to comprehend that if with our joy, which alone is real and lasting yet ever new, there is mingled some pain for having followed after other pleasures, or some fear of losing it through the attraction of those other pleasures which tempt us without respite, it is the joy of having found God that is its guiding principle, as it is that of the entire change in our life. And thus we shall understand that joy and fear will temper each other, and we must work constantly to preserve them, "and as soon as we feel ourselves carried away too much in the one direction, we should lean towards the other that we may remain upright . . . until the promise made us by Christ Jesus to accomplish His joy in us be fulfilled. Let us not be cast down, let us not believe that piety consists only in inconsolable bitterness. True piety, which can be found in its perfection in heaven alone is so full of compensations that it provides them in the beginning and progress and consummation of the Christian life. It is a light so brilliant that it sheds a glory upon everything it touches" (VI, 221; 222).

---

[1] *Fourth letter* (VI, 87; 213). This is a passage of great importance in interpreting Pascal's thought. The *sign* hides God from those who rest content with it; the *thing*, to those who reach it behind the symbol, reveals Him. Here we find more than the germ of Berkeley's symbolic realism, in harmony with Christian tradition. We shall return to this in Ch. VIII.

[2] *Seventh letter* (VI, 219; 220).

[3] *Fifth letter* (VI, 161; 217).

Pascal, however, was still engaged in his controversy with the Jesuits. In April 1657, after having sketched out a ninth *Provinciale*, he stopped short to help the *curés* of Paris to edit their pamphlets against moral laxity, which he accused of corrupting not only men's habits, but worse still, the moral law, contrasting the duplicity of the children of the world with the simplicity of the children of the Gospel.[17] Yet he retired from the struggle. Why was this?

[15] *Sixth letter* (VI, 217-18; 219).

[16] *Jn.* XIV, 27 and XVI, 22 (quoted by Pascal, VI, 221; 221).

[17] VII, 279, 326. Among the writings attributed to Pascal are: *Factum pour les curés de Paris, contre un livre intitulé "Apologie pour les casuistes"*, 25 January,

It is very likely[1] that in the course of the conflict a change had been wrought in his mind, through the influence of his own reflections and meditations, the objections raised against him, the reading he had undertaken, and the condemnation he had drawn down upon himself from the civil and the religious authorities; against these he first of all revolted[2] though he professed for them an unequivocal respect, based on doctrine and on reason.[3]

We may surmise, too, that as Pascal progressed in his inner life and was able to rise to a higher state of perfection, he was able to judge his opponents more fairly, and himself more severely. He realized that the very success of his polemics might be a source of danger to himself and to the cause he served. He perceived that he might be inflicting injury upon *humility* and *charity*, without really benefiting truth; following the counsels of St. Francis de Sales which Mother Angélique Arnauld had incessantly quoted throughout the controversy,[4] he comprehended that "eloquence, which diverts more people than it converts," is less pleasing to God than silence, tears and penitence; that success is never of real good to a man; that it is not our mission to make the truth triumph in order that we may plume ourselves upon it afterwards, but that it may be better

---

1658 (VII, 278-299), *Second écrit des curés de Paris*, 2 April, 1658 (VII, 308-326), *Cinquième écrit sur l'avantage que les hérétiques prennent contre l'Église de la morale des casuistes et des jésuites*, 11 June, 1658 (VII, 355-373), *Projet de mandement contre l'Apologie pour les casuistes* (VII, 380-391), *Sixième écrit*, 24 July, 1658 (VIII, 42-63).

[1] Jovy, *op. cit.* II, p. 1; and the preceding chapter of this book. The last two *Provinciales* show this change of front very clearly.

[2] See, for example, the fragments published at the end of the *Pensées* (*920*). "If my letters are condemned at Rome, what I condemn in them is condemned in heaven. *Ad tuum, Domine Jesu, tribunal appello.* You are yourselves corruptible. We ought to obey God rather than men (*Acts*, v, 29)." And again: "The Inquisition and the Society [of Jesus], the two scourges of the truth."

[3] Upon his zeal for "God's command," a zeal so great "that he could not bear to see it transgressed in the smallest particular," see the Life by Mme Périer (I, 97; 32). Note also his remarkable profession of faith as to union with the pope, in the sixth letter to Mlle de Roannez (VI, 216-217): "The body has no more life without the head, than the head has without the body. Whosoever separates from the one or from the other is no longer a part of the body, and is no more a member of Jesus Christ." See also Ch. IX on this subject.

[4] Strowski, III, pp. 204-5.

served by the mildness, discretion and upright conduct of the man who practises the virtues of humility and charity "in solitude, far from the sight of men."[1] Henceforward Pascal devoted himself to this end, and the last four years of his life were little more than a constant and sublime effort to progress in the true knowledge of God, which is love.

His illnesses and infirmities had increased to such an extent that it had become an impossibility for him to devote himself to any continuous work, and he spent the last four years of his life in a pitiable state of weakness.[2] Yet, strangely enough, it seems as if his activity and his genius were augmented by his sufferings and the near approach of death, for during those four years he developed wonderfully, both in his knowledge of external things and in his knowledge of humanity, but above all in his knowledge of God; in this last domain his life put forth its rarest and most perfect fruit. By the ever increasing light of eternity his whole being grew and was fortified, everything took on a new form: of himself he was nothing, but immersed as he was in things Divine, he transmitted their ardour to his fellow-men.

It was at this time that, as if merely amusing himself, he made his most brilliant mathematical discoveries, thus giving the lie to all those who, from Voltaire down to certain critics of our own day, blame Pascal's "terrible asceticism" for having diverted him from all normal activity, made him lapse into a "melancholy gloom," and "waste his time sewing papers into his coat-pockets at the moment when he ought to have been giving France the glory of discovering the infinitesimal calculus." Now, had it not been for this asceticism we should not have had the *Pensées*; and they assuredly are worth more than an algorithm, and will endure when its day is done. Nor did this asceticism of his do any apparent harm to Pascal's mathematical genius, for it was at this precise period that he laid the foundations for the infinitesimal calculus, the integral calculus, and the calculus of probabilities. He was then but thirty-five years old, and he was to die at thirty-nine. If we remember that, of Pascal's peers, Descartes did not formulate and give to the world his analytical geometry until he was forty-one years of age (1637), and Newton did not discover the law of gravitation till he was forty-four (1686), we cannot fail to admire the toil and the genius of the man who, at an age when others were still seeking knowledge, had created hydrostatics, formulated the experimental methods of physics, and discovered and applied the principles of modern mathematics; and we may well ask ourselves what else he might have given the world had he not been so early removed from it.

---

[1] *Fourth letter* to Mlle de Roannez (VII, 88; 214).
[2] Mme Périer, I, 80; 24.

As a matter of fact Pascal had never lost sight of mathematics. In 1654 (III, 371), he had been in correspondence with Fermat upon the *règle des partis*, that is, the equitable assessment of the stakes in an interrupted game, and laid "the foundations of a mathematical theory of the laws of chance, the applications of which are universal, and by virtue of which, even more than by virtue of the theory of movements and forces, numbers effectually govern the world, or play a part in its government"; he entered upon a path "more uneven, less imposing, and narrower at first sight" than the way of theoretical mechanics, but one "which opened out in much more varied directions."[1] Pascal had a clear idea of the fruitful results which might be obtained from this mathematics of chance, *aleæ geometria*,[2] and he indicated them in an Address to the Academy of Paris, which contains the vast programme of his mathematical works (III, 294). From the middle or end of 1656, as we see from Mylon's letter to Huyghens, 2nd March, 1657 (III, 437), he resumed his study of combinative analysis, probabilities and games of chance, upon which Huyghens and Carcavi were engaged. At length an unexpected circumstance, drawing his attention to the well-known problem of the *roulette* or cycloid,[1] was to make him the immediate precursor, or rather the actual creator, of the integral calculus.

---

[1] Cournot, *op. cit.* I, pp. 275-6.

[2] *Ambiguæ enim sortis eventus fortuitæ contingentiæ potius quam naturali necessitati merito tribuuntur. Ideo res hactenus erravit incerta; nunc autem quæ experimento rebellis fuit rationis dominium effugere non potuit. Eam quippe tanta securitate in artem per Geometriam reduximus, ut certitudinis ejus particeps facta, jam audacter prodeat; et sic matheseos demonstrationes cum aleæ incertitudine jungendo, et quæ contraria videntur conciliando, ab utraque nominationem suam accipiens, stupendum hunc titulum jure sibi arrogat: aleæ Geometria.*" This remarkable passage is taken from the address *Celeberrimæ matheseos academiæ parisiensi* (III, 307-8).

There is no doubt that, before Pascal's day, Archimedes' method of exhaustion and Cavalieri's method of indivisibles already allowed of the solution of certain problems in finding areas and volumes which lead up to the integral calculus, and the converse problem, relating to tangents, and leading up to the differential calculus, might also be treated either by Descartes' or Fermat's methods. There is no doubt, either, that after Pascal's day it was still necessary to endow the new analysis with a symbolism which would permit of reducing it to a few simple, general rules; this is what Leibniz did. But for Pascal we may claim the glory of having formulated the principles of infinitesimal analysis.[2] He was the first to determine by absolutely rigorous methods the sum to infinity of a series of infinitely small quantities; with a force of genius "which makes him the equal of the very greatest" (IV, lxv), he solved problems that had hitherto been insoluble, employing the most varied type of integrals in the evaluation of geometric volumes; and, if he did not furnish the formula for a general theory of integration, he furnished, in concrete cases, decisive examples of his method,[3] so that even to-day his mathematical treatises, like his works on physics, remain finished models of the kind from which not a single word need be withdrawn. Pascal's synthetic, concrete method absolved him from the necessity of seeking for an algorithm, but an algorithm might be derived from it, and Leibniz, who was its inventor, tells us that it was in reading Pascal's *Traité des sinus du quart de cercle*, and in thinking over his "*characteristic triangle*" supposed to be infinitely small, that he arrived at the exact idea of a differential; the very formulas of the infinitesimal calculus arise out of annotations made by Leibniz on a manuscript copy of Pascal's, from which, to use his own expression, he drew his guiding light.[1] On the other hand, we shall see that Pascal himself, starting from science in order to outstrip it, raised himself from this point by a "series of reflections that are worth more than all the rest of geometry itself" (IX, 270; 184) to his views on the discontinuity of orders and on the infinite, which constitute the central point whence his whole work may be viewed in perspective.

---

[1] This is the name given to the curve described by a nail in a cart-wheel in one complete revolution. The following works may be consulted: *Histoire des sciences mathématiques*, Marie, IV, pp. 182-230; Hatzfeld's *Pascal*, pp. 162-185 (by Lt. Périer); Tannery's *Notions de mathématiques*, p. 339 *et seq.*; and Boutroux' notes on Pascal's scientific treatises, in the *Grands Écrivains* edition.

[2] In his letter to M. de Sluse; Dec. 1658, Pascal describes "the wonders of the new analysis" (IX, 138).

[3] This was thoroughly understood by De Sluse. cf. his letter of June 13, 1659, to Huyghens (quoted by Jovy, *op. cit.* I, p. 552).

Of the psychological aspect of his discovery his sister Gilberte (I, 81; 24) and his niece Marguerite Périer (I, 134) have given us some very curious details. While he was working to combat atheism, Marguerite tells us, he suffered from a very violent fit of toothache which kept him awake all night, and in order to divert his mind from his physical misery he determined to concentrate his attention on the problem of the cycloid, propounded by Father Mersenne in 1628, and the subject of much research, although nobody

---

[1] Leibniz' *Mathematische Schriften* (Gerhardt), Vol. III, pp. 67, 71, gives a letter to Bernouilli, April, 1703, and the account of his early studies in Paris in 1672, as well as a letter to Tschirnhaus, Dec. 1679 (Vol. IV, 481), a letter to L'Hospital Nov., 27, 1694 (II, p. 259), and the passage quoted in Vol. V, p. 399. The figure called by Leibniz a "characteristic triangle" denotes in Pascal a circular "trilinear rectangle" contained between two rectangular axes and a small arc limited in size to these axes (or its tangent), this trilinear figure being supposed to be infinitely small (*Traité des sinus du quart de cercle*, X, 60, and note 1. cf. Letter from Dettonville to Carcavi, June, 1658 (VIII, 368). Upon the relations between Pascal and Leibniz, see IX, 60, 225-227, and a curious unpublished fragment in which Leibniz, transcribing Pascal's idea of the two infinites, adds: "What he has just said about the twofold infinity is only an introduction to my system" (Baruzzi, *Leibniz et l'organisation religieuse de la terre*, pp. 224-30).

had yet been able to arrive at an entirely satisfactory method of finding the total area of the cycloid. Pascal discovered a complete solution of the problem, with full demonstrations. He expected nothing further from it than the relief it had afforded him from pain, but M. de Roannez pointed out to him that "since it was in his mind to combat the atheists, he ought to prove to them that he knew more than any of them in matters that concerned geometry and were capable of demonstration, and therefore, if in all that concerned matters of faith, he were ready to submit it was because he knew just where those proofs would lead him" (I, 135). He therefore advised him to start a competition among all the mathematicians, and to offer a prize of sixty pistoles[1] to anyone who should solve the problem. After having pondered over his demonstrations (for a considerably longer time than his sister and his niece say) Pascal, under the pseudonym of Amos Dettonville (an anagram for Louis de Montalte) in June 1658 addressed a circular letter to all the geometers of repute, asking them to find the area of a segment of the cycloid, its centre of gravity, the volume of the solids it generates in revolving round its axis and round its base and their centres of gravity, as well as the centres of gravity of the halves of the said volumes supposed to be intersected by a plane through their axis. Then,[2] having discovered that the first four problems had been virtually solved by Roberval, he withdrew them, deciding that the competition should be judged upon the results of the last two only—the centres of gravity of the solids of revolution and of the solids cut off. At the same time, he explained that "an unforeseen opportunity" having made him think of geometry he had made for himself "methods for determining the size and centres of gravity of solids, of plane and curved surfaces, and of curved lines, which he believed would apply to almost everything," methods that he had at first applied successfully to the centres of gravity of solids, and had then used to solve all the other problems connected with solids (VIII, 201).

---

[1] About £30.

[2] See Pascal's own account in his *Histoire de la roulette* (VIII, 200-201) and in the *Récit de l'examen et du jugement des écrits envoyés pour les prix* (VIII, 245). In these accounts Pascal seems to forget that his first circular had propounded the four problems already solved by Roberval, with the rest. Herein lies the misunderstanding with his rivals.

The challenge offered by Pascal was accepted by numerous scientists—Wren, the architect of St. Paul's, de Sluse, canon of Liège, Huyghens, Wallis of Oxford, Father Lalouère of Toulouse. Not one of them, despite the protests of Wallis and Lalouère, found a complete and perfect solution, and the competition, ended by two letters from Dettonville, of October 7th and 9th (VIII, 157), was judged on November 24th by a jury over which Carcavi presided (VIII, 233). In the following month, in a *letter to Carcavi* (VIII, 327) which was followed by several *geometrical treatises* (IX, 3-133), Pascal gave his own solutions. Whatever we may think of the "harshness" or the "adroitness" with which Pascal defended his rights, and the complaints made by his opponents,[1] the fact remains that his discovery aroused universal admiration in the scientists of the period, and gained for him their unqualified esteem and interest.[2] In fact, "the work upon the cycloid marks an important epoch in the history of human thought" (IV, lxiv).

It would be impossible to enter into detail here about these discoveries, since they lie outside the scope of this study, and we will reserve till later the philosophical conclusions drawn from them by Pascal. But in order to give an idea of Pascal's mathematical method and genius, indispensable to those who desire to comprehend the thought of one who was "a geometer, a pyrrhonist, and a Christian," we will briefly describe the *Arithmetical Triangle* and its applications.

It is thus that Pascal forms his "arithmetical triangle": the generating number is unity, and each number is obtained by adding to the number immediately above the number immediately to the left of the latter, thus:[1]

---

[1] IV, lviii *et seq.*; VIII, 181-194 (upon Pascal's accusations of Torricelli); Hatzfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 179; Jovy, *op. cit.* I, 473-559.

[2] In IV, lix, will be found testimonies from Huyghens, Fermat, de Sluse, Leibniz, Bernouilli.

1
1 1
1 2 1
1 3 3 1
1 4 6 4 1
1 5 10 10 5 1 etc.

Now the applications of the figure imagined by Pascal are innumerable, and he gives a certain number of them, developing some and merely indicating others.[2]

1. The arithmetical triangle permits of determining *numerical orders*,[3] the first vertical row giving numbers of the first order or simple units: the second, ordinary numbers formed by adding units; the third triangular numbers; the fourth pyramidal numbers, etc. From that point Pascal starts, to determine the relation between a number, its root and the index of its order.

2. The arithmetical triangle serves *to calculate combinations* (III, 469, 556); either *combinations* properly so called, or *arrangements with repetitions* of two objects.

Here is an example of the first. For four objects ABCD the number of combinations is fifteen—either 4 units (A, B, C, D), 6 pairs (AB, AC, AD, BC, BD, CD), 4 sets of 3 (ABC, ABD, ACD, BCD), 1 set of 4 (ABCD). This is represented by the fourth line of the arithmetical triangle.

And here is an example of the second. If I am playing "heads or tails" one round may give H or T: 1, 1, or 2 combinations; two rounds may give HH; HT, TH; TT: 1, 2, 1, or 4 combinations; three rounds, HHH; HHT, HTH, THH; HTT, THT, TTH; TTT: 1, 3, 3, 1, or 8 combinations; and so it goes on. Here we shall note that in the even rounds there is one number corresponding to the equal division of heads and tails, while in the odd rounds there are in the middle two equal numbers corresponding to the cases in which either heads or tails appear one extra time.

---

[1] *Traité du triangle arithmétique avec quelques autres petits traités sur la même matière*, 1665 (III, 435). Pascal reads the numbers diagonally (III, 446).

[2] III, 465.

[3] III, 466; III, 512; VIII, 335-362.

3. This may be directly applied to the theory of *probabilities* and to the *assessment of points* (*règle des partis*) (III, 478, 486), to which combinative analysis is the key. To take a very simple case, we see that the triangle tells us the probability of getting heads $m$ times in $n$ rounds. In three contests, for instance, I have *one* chance in eight of turning up heads three times; *three* chances in eight of turning up heads twice, and so on. In this way we can solve all the problems dealing with the advantages to be gained by staking on one side or the other. In a great many rounds, however, calculations would become difficult, and in these days we have substituted shortened methods, but these lead to the same results as Pascal's arithmetical triangle, and are on the same principle.

4. The arithmetical triangle, as Bernouilli had already remarked, also provides the formula which leads to Newton's *binomial theorem*. It directly permits of our finding, as Pascal says, "the powers of the binomials" (III, 499), and of calculating the positive integral co-efficients of these powers. Here are examples:

$$(a+b)^3=1a^3+3a^2b+3ab^2+1b^3$$
$$(a+b)^6=1a^6+6a^5b+15a^4b^2+20a^3b^3+15a^2b^4+6ab^5+1b^6$$

5. In this way Pascal was naturally led, with the help of his arithmetical triangle, to seek the successive totals of similar (positive and integral) powers of the terms of an arithmetical progression,[37] and this at once permitted him

---

[37] *Potestatum numericarum summa* (III 346-367). If we let

$$1+2+3+\dots+n=S_1$$
$$1^2+2^3+3^2+\dots\dots+n^2=S_2,$$

knowing that $S_1=\frac{n(n+1)}{2}$, from the expression

$$(n+1)^3=1+3S_2+3S_1+1n$$

we immediately deduce the value of $S_2$:

$$S^3=\frac{n+1}{3}\quad\left(n^2+\frac{n}{2}\right)\quad\frac{n(n+1)(2n+1)}{6}$$

to find the area of parabolic curves of any degree and an infinite number of other curves, and to set out the rules of integration with absolute precision. "The sum of the same powers of a certain number of lines is to the power immediately above the highest of them as the unit is to the index of this same power" (III, 365). Thus:

$$\int_0^n n^p dn = \frac{n^{p+1}}{p+1}$$

For instance, if we consider the parabola $y=x^2$ and try to estimate the area contained between this curve, the axis of $x$ and the ordinate parallel to O$y$, when $x=1$ we obtain by dividing the abscissa into $n$ equal parts between O and 1, a series of rectangles, their horizontal side rectangles being equal to $\frac{1}{n}$ and their vertical sides equal to $(\frac{1}{n})^2$, $(\frac{2}{n})^2 \dots (\frac{n}{n})^2$ respectively. The sum of the areas of the rectangles then is:

$$\frac{1}{n}\left(\frac{1}{n}\right)^2 + \frac{1}{n}\left(\frac{2}{n}\right)^2 + \dots + \frac{1}{n}\left(\frac{n}{n}\right)^2 = \frac{1^2}{n^3} + \frac{2^2}{n^3} + \dots + \frac{n^2}{n^3}$$

$$= \frac{1^2+2^2+\dots+n^2}{n^3} = \frac{n(n+1)(2n+1)}{6n^3} = \frac{(1+\frac{1}{n})(2+\frac{1}{n})}{6}$$

When $n$ is large, $\frac{1}{n}$ is small, and the numerator is practically 2, so that the sum is $\frac{2}{6}=\frac{1}{3}$ which represents the area sought.

Nowadays we arrive at the same result by slightly different methods; we get the formula $\int_0^1 x^2 dx = \frac{x^3}{3} = \frac{1}{3}$ in which $dx$ corresponds with $\frac{1}{n}$ and $x$ with $\frac{p}{n}$ in Pascal's formula.

$$\Sigma_{p=1}^{p=n} \left(\frac{p}{n}\right)^2 \frac{1}{n}$$

6. Finally, it is extremely noteworthy that Pascal's discovery contained all the rational principles of *statistical science*, which at that time was still unknown. In fact, the probability that in a thousand tosses for heads or tails, for

instance, the number of "heads" will be confined within given limits may be exactly calculated with the help of Pascal's numbers, or approximately, but more rapidly, with the help of the *Gauss curve* or bell curve. Now this curve, which governs all phenomena subject to the law of large numbers, may be regarded as an imaginary interpretation of Pascal's triangle, in the sense that, from the practical point of view, the values given by the numbers of a fixed line of Pascal's triangle approximate to those yielded by the Gauss curve.

Let us take, for example, the bullets that hit the bull's eye and those that fall wide of the mark on a rifle range.[1] If we put the divisions that are equidistant from the mark into abscissas, and mark at the extremity of each division an ordinate proportional to the number of hits that fell in that division, we get symmetrical points on both sides of the mark. If the number of divisions is sufficiently great, the joining of the points obtained forms a certain curve whose general shape is that of the bell curve, a curve which will be more or less sharp or rounded, according as the aim has been more or less precise. If it were a question of representing the height of French conscripts, for instance, we should carry out to abscissas the estimated heights in centimetres, and make ordinates of the number of persons of such height. And it is the same thing for all the phenomena subject to the general rules of chance.

We see then that Pascal, speaking of the various uses of the arithmetical triangle, was not wrong in saying: "I am leaving out many more of them than I have already given, for it is remarkable how many properties it has."

As the invention of a mind that works synthetically and concretely, the arithmetical triangle, and the treatises in which Pascal explains its various uses, show us the mathematical genius of their author actually at work. Let us merely note in passing that the distinguishing characteristic of his mathematical demonstrations was to prefer combinative analysis[1] to the algebraic methods in use, and to the Cartesian analysis in particular. Combinative analysis, if not so short or so economical a method as the earlier one, has an advantage over it in that it more fully satisfies the reason, because it helps us better to comprehend the order and inherent reason of things. Let us note, too, with Cantor, that Pascal gave us[2] the first application of reasoning through recurrence, and that he, perceiving the conventional character of the decimal system,[3] was the first to seek, in determining divisibility, for a method applicable to any numerical system whatever. From a more fundamental point of view we may say that Pascal, without applying himself to finding a general abstract formula, endeavoured to discover a method at once *concrete* and *universal*,[4] by propounding from a concrete case a theory capable of an indefinite number of applications, and then expressing or illustrating it in various ways,[5] deducing from it himself, by virtue of examples, some applications to special definite cases.[6] Thus in the arithmetical triangle he grasped a very general property of numbers, just as, in the concrete fact of movement, he perceived the general relativity of an entire world comprised between the two infinites, the infinitely great and the infinitely little. For, as he says (IX, 255; 174), "there are certain properties common to all things, the recognition of which opens the mind to the greatest marvels in Nature."

---

[1] The experimental numbers for the wides are 2, 7, 16, 25.

---

[1] cf. the opening of the treatise *Potestatum numericam summa* (III, 348). Fermat, who "appreciated his genius infinitely," considered Pascal the best person to undertake the applications of his own numerical inventions. (III, 397).

[2] Pascal was the first to formulate with absolute precision the method of reasoning which is the basis of modern mathematics; this he did in the twelfth conclusion drawn from his arithmetical triangle (III, 456).

[3] In demonstrating a general method of determining, by simply inspecting the sum of its integers, whether a certain number is divisible by any other given number, Pascal adds these remarkable words (III, 314-16): "*Et non solum in progressione denaria, qua numeratio nostra procedit* (*denaria enim ex instituto hominum, non ex necessitate naturæ ut vulgus arbitratur et sane satis inepte, posita est*); *sed in quacumque progressione instituatur numeratio, non fallet hic tradita methodus.*"

[4] VIII, 335.

[5] *De numericis ordinibus*, conclusion (III, 509-511).

[6] The application, for instance, of his Triangle to the assessment of shares, III, 482; III, 527.

On account of their consequences to philosophy, too, Pascal's discoveries were to be of incalculable significance. "Through the unlooked-for exactitude it gave to the notions of chance and probability until then so hazy and confused," says Cournot[1] rightly, "the theory of mathematical probability of which Pascal and Fermat laid the foundations . . . placed or was to place the real principles of criticism of all kinds on the right path; it opened or was to open for logicians the only door leading out of the circle in which logic had been confined since the days of the Stagirite."

While Pascal was thus, as it were, amusing himself with the prelude to one of the greatest movements in human thought, and forestalling by several generations our progress in science, higher ends were engaging his genius and his activities. These ends were moral ends, the guidance of souls, the salvation of souls, the order of charity. "To tell you frankly what I think of geometry," he wrote from Bienassis to Fermat in 1660 (X, 4-5; 229), "I hold it to be the finest exercise for the mind, but at the same time I consider it so useless that I think there is very little difference between a man who is nothing but a geometer, and a skilled artisan. I call geometry the finest craft in the world, but after all it is only a craft, and I have often said that though it is good as a mental test, it is not sufficient to exercise all our powers." And we remember that admirable *Pensée* upon which so many men meditated during the Great War: "*The vanity of knowledge.* The knowledge of external things will not console me for ignorance of the moral law in times of affliction, but the knowledge of morals will always console me for ignorance of external knowledge" (*67*). Henceforward Pascal placed *uprightness* well above geometry, and above that again, at infinite height, *charity*.

[1] *op. cit.* I, 278-9. Pascal, moreover, as Cournot points out, was alone in perceiving the general consequences of the mathematical theory of chance, which Leibniz himself seems to have overlooked.

Pascal had always been interested in politics, viewed in their first basic principles. As his sister Mme. Périer tells us (I, 97-8 ; 32), he was so zealous for the order established by God that he could not bear it to be violated in the smallest particular. He had always been greatly attached to the service of the king; he said that in a republic it is "very wrong to help to place a king there and deprive of their liberty the nations to whom God had given it, but that in a state wherein the royal power is already established, the respect due to it could not be violated without committing a kind of sacrilege, because the power God has granted it [is] not only a symbol of, but a participation in the power of God," and he declared that there is no worse evil than civil war.

Towards the end of 1659 or the beginning of 1660, he had the opportunity of giving advice upon this subject to a child of noble birth;[1] he wrote for him three very remarkable discourses, a reproduction of which has been preserved for us by Nicole.[2] In these he defined the ethics of integrity, in relation not only to the demands of the social life but also to man's own nature and the principle of order upon which ethics is based.

> "Let us imagine," he said, "a man cast by a tempest upon an unknown island, the inhabitants of which had lost their king. As he strongly resembled the latter, he was taken for him and received all the honours due to the king. He allowed himself to be treated as a king, always remembering his natural estate, however, and well aware that the kingdom did not belong to him. Thus there were two thoughts in his mind, one that he made manifest, the other that he concealed; it was by means of the first that he dealt with his people, and by means of the second that he dealt with himself.

---

[1] No doubt the eldest son of the Duc de Luynes.

[2] *Trois discours sur la condition des grands* (IX, 361; 231). Nicole's account was written in 1670, but he declared that what Pascal had said was unforgettable. We give a brief summary of it here.

"It is, too, the effect of chance that gives you the wealth of which you find yourself possessed, for of yourself and your own nature you have no right to them. The constitution, by virtue of which this wealth has been transmitted to you, is based upon the will of legislators only, and not upon a natural right you possess to these things. Your title to them is of human creation. Your mind and body of themselves are equally indifferent to the rank of ferryman or of duke, unless a natural bond attaches them to the one estate rather than to the other. You must, therefore, think in two ways. In presence of the lower orders, your external actions must be in accordance with your rank. They believe that there is real greatness in noble birth; do not let them recognize their error, which is essential to the good order and peace of the State. But do not put your elevation to bad use through pride, passion and incivility; learn to know yourself, and by a process of thought more true, though more concealed, hold yourself in an absolute equality with all men, for that is your natural state.

"In the world there are two kinds of greatness: the greatness of position, which depends upon men's will, such as rank, titles, noble birth; and natural greatness, such as knowledge, virtue, health, strength. To the first kind we owe respect for position, accompanied by an inner recognition of the justice of this order.[1] To the second we owe natural respect, founded upon esteem. I am not bound to esteem you because you are a duke, but I *am* bound to salute you, and it would be a proof of folly and low-mindedness if I were to omit such a sign of respect.

"God is the King of Charity; you are a king of concupiscence. It is from concupiscence that you derive your power, that is, from the possession of things that the avarice of man desires. Act like a king of concupiscence, for

---

[1] This very important maxim (IX, 369; 236) is elucidated by the *Pensées* dealing with the *reason of effects*.

> it is not any force in you that makes these people subject to you, but their own desires. Do not dominate them by force, but satisfy their desires, as long as these are right, relieve their necessities, be benevolent towards them. If you stop short there, you will certainly be damned, but at any rate you will be damned like a gentleman. But you must *not* stop short there. You must despise concupiscence and its kingdom, and aspire to that kingdom of charity in which all the subjects thirst only for charity and desire only the blessings of charity."

Pascal pointed out the way of charity to men; for him henceforward charity excelled all else.[1] And this charity of his was directed to the whole of man, to his body as well to his soul.

At that time, that is, hardly a year before his death, Pascal, to whom the world already owed a host of useful inventions (X, 282), such as the calculating machine and the hydraulic press, conceived the first idea of the *omnibus*. To that end he created a Company for public conveyance, for which he obtained letters-patent from the King which were registered by the Parliament of 7th February, 1662. On March 18th of that year there was inaugurated "with extraordinary ceremony and state" the first line of coaches, at a fare of five sous, which ran between the Porte Saint-Antoine and the Luxembourg.[2]

At the same time he endeavoured by all the means in his power to relieve the unfortunate. He persuaded his relatives to visit the poor, that they might learn voluntarily to do without useless comforts and superfluous apparel; he exhorted them to sacrifice their own time and their pleasures in the service of the poor, to help them daily and in simple style, each according to his power, because such is the Christian vocation, and on this Christ will judge the world. He was himself so given to the practice of this virtue that it often happened that he was obliged to have recourse to money-lenders because he had given all he had to the poor (I, 86-9; 27-8).

---

[1] "The way of God, who arranges all things with gentle mildness, is to put religion into the mind by reason, and into the heart by grace. But to desire to put it into mind and heart by force and threats, is to put in not religion but fear, *terrorem potius quam religionem*" (*185*). Such an idea, as Stewart has well shown (*op. cit.*, p. 158 *et seq.*), is distinctly anti-Jansenist.

[2] X, 276; 247. It was in accordance with Pascal's conception that the present omnibus service was organized towards the thirtieth year of the nineteenth century, as a quaint brochure by Monmerqué, published in 1828, testifies.

But since the soul's good is of infinitely more importance than that of the body, it was the welfare of souls that was henceforth his constant care. He detached himself more and more from all other ties to devote his efforts to this "one thing needful"; nothing interested him more or secured more of his attention than all matters that could contribute to his salvation and that of others.[1] His life attained its *unity* and highest *perfection* in this thought to which he referred everything else, letting it judge and subordinate to itself all the rest according to the relation between them and this ultimate aim. "He no longer cared for any knowledge but that of virtue."[2] He detached himself from all things to attach himself to God.

Pascal, his sister tells us, acted from principle in all things. His first care, therefore, was to bring his own life into conformity with that science of perfection he endeavoured to acquire, and to which he invited others. For what avails the knowledge of ethics, and of what value is the preaching of morality if one does not oneself practise it? From his sister and from the *curé* of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, Beurrier (X, 391), who visited him in his last illness we learn how, by depriving himself of all pleasure and every superfluity, by the practice of self-mortification, by poverty, chastity, charity, in self-effacement, gentleness and simplicity, Pascal succeeded in breaking down his pride, the supreme temptation of an arrogant, dominating, and uneasy nature such as his. We know, too, how he came to realize that above the order of mind, to which great intellects belong, and surpassing it as much as, and even more than, mind surpasses the bodily order, is the order of charity, perceptible to the heart alone; and how finally, by those "motions of true charity" which place man infinitely above all intellectual discoveries, he trod the path to perfection.

---

[1] Étienne Périer's preface to the Port Royal edition of the *Pensées* (XII, cxcvii; 315). Mme Périer (I, 59; 11).

[2] (I, 63). The text of 1684 runs: "He no longer knew any other science than perfection."

Care for the salvation of others was never, with him, sundered from the care for his own salvation. With all the power at his command he worked at his *Apology for the Christian religion*. We do not know at what date he first conceived the idea of it; it may well be that it was at the time when he was acquainted, in the world, with powerful minds, freethinkers and atheists;[1] but it was not until 1657, after the miracle of the Holy Thorn, when he was thirty-four years of age, that he began to apply himself seriously to it.

His design[2] was to confute all who attack the *truth* or the *holiness* of religion—that is, not only atheists, infidels and heretics, who refuse to submit their reason to the truths of the Christian faith, but also those Christians and Catholics who, whilst forming part of the body of the Church, do not live in accordance with the pure precepts of the Gospel, or regulate all their actions by the pattern laid down for them there.

It took him a whole year to prepare for this great work. He read an enormous amount.[3] First it was the Holy

---

[1] cf. the witness of Bridieu, archdeacon of Beauvais: "M. Pascal has written some short articles against eight freethinkers of Poitou who do not believe in God; he desires to convince them by natural and moral reasons." The first idea of the Apology would thus go back to 1652, but Étienne Périer tells us that he had conceived his design before he was thirty years of age, while on the other hand Mme Périer says that he was about thirty-four when he began to work at it seriously, since his infirmities had previously hindered him. It would be about 1658, therefore, that he began to write the *Pensées*.

[2] Étienne Périer (XII, cxcv; 314) and Beurrier (X, 386-7) are our authorities here.

[3] On Pascal's reading with the Apology in view, cf. XII, lxvii-xciv, Strowski, III, pp. 222-269, and Ch. I of this book.

Scriptures, which he knew by heart;[1] then the *Augustinus*,[2] and St. Augustine, whose apparent harshness he tried, Nicole tells us, to temper; then, over again and constantly, Epictetus, especially the "Conversations"; Montaigne, whose Essays were his lay Bible, as it were; Charron and Grotius. Then we must add the works of two Spaniards, or rather, two Catalans, who were to provide him with much that Pascal regarded as of decisive importance—the one for the basis of the apology, and the other for the history of the Jewish people and the knowledge of Hebrew tradition: the *Natural Theology* of Raymond de Sebonde, and the *Pugio fidei* of Raymond Martin. He was not content moreover to be a "mere shell-gatherer," according to Nicole's *mot*.[3] He thought out for himself all that he read, and discovered afresh things that had been said before his time, or that one thought one knew already, so that, when said by him, "they seemed quite different" (I, 71). At the same time he began to put together the various thoughts that came into his mind on the subject, and in every case, according to his custom, he "arranged them in his mind before producing them," that he might thoroughly reflect upon the *order* he had to give to them all (XII, clxxxi; 304).

From the middle of the year 1659, that is, after the solution of the cycloid problem, Pascal seems to have been in possession of his principles, his method, and the leading ideas of his great work. He expressed them orally, with the natural eloquence thanks to which he could always say what he wanted, in the way he wanted (I, 72; 17), before a few people who owned that they had never heard "anything finer, more forcible, or more touching and convincing."[1] His strength, however, was always on the decline,[2] and despite the brief improvement which the return, by water, to his native district in the spring of 1660 procured him, his maladies had become such that he was forbidden to write, or even read, or to speak of anything that demanded any intense application. His memory, which was prodigious,[3] sometimes failed him. "When writing down my thought, it sometimes escapes me," he said. "That reminds me of my weakness, which I am constantly forgetting." (*372*). Then, for fear of losing the thoughts, the ideas or expressions that came into his mind, he noted them down: "for that he seized upon the first scrap of paper that came to hand, on which he put down his thought in a few words, and very often parts of words only, since he wrote for himself alone," so that he might recollect them later. It even happened that when he was out walking he wrote upon his nails (XII, clxxxix; 309-310; I, 134).

---

[1] "His whole time," says Mme Périer, "was employed in prayer and the reading of the Holy Scriptures, in which he took incredible delight. He used to say that the Scriptures were not intellectual knowledge, but knowledge of the heart, that they were intelligible only to those of upright heart, and that all others merely found them obscure. It was in this frame of mind that he would read, setting aside all the light of his own intelligence; and he studied them so assiduously that he knew them all by heart, so that one dared not quote them incorrectly before him, for if there were the slightest fault, he would say, 'That is not in the Holy Scriptures', or 'This is how it runs,' and then he would give the precise reference" (I, 70-71; 16).

[2] Possibly his *Abrégé de la vie de Jésus-Christ* dates from this period. In it Pascal follows a little work by Jansenius, *Series vitæ Jesu Christi juxta ordinem temporum*, published at the end of his *Tetrateuchus*, Paris, 1655.

[3] Quoted by Ste.-Beuve, *op. cit.* III, p. 384, note.

Many of these are mere sketches; some of them, highly polished, are completed studies. But, such as they are, all these fragments (which were put together, recopied and published after being arranged by Port Royal in 1670, and then, in our own days, re-edited with the most scrupulous exactitude) even in the confused state in which they have reached us, without apparent order or systematic unity, in the distorted form and shaky handwriting which the manucript displays—such, indeed, as we may imagine them welling up from Pascal's living soul—these same fragments constitute, there is little doubt, France's most stupendous spiritual creation.

---

[1] Étienne Périer (XII, clxxxii; 304-5). See the fragmentary *Pensées*, *416* and *430*, and the two accounts of this exposé by Filleau de la Chaise and Étienne Périer (XI). The first of these, the *Discours sur les Pensées de M. Pascal où l'on essaie de faire voir quel était son dessein*, was composed eight years after the event, and published in the name of Dubois de la Cour, though commonly attributed to Filleau de la Chaise. It is a very important document, taken from very well-authenticated sources, and it affords us the most complete and faithful reconstruction of Pascal's scheme. Unfortunately, Pascal's Jansenist circle having found, Mme Périer tells us, "that it contained nothing about the things we desired to say, and several that we did not wish to say," substituted for it, with untoward results, as a preface to the 1670 edition, a curtailed and lifeless summary, and probably one less true to Pascal's real idea, because it was more prejudiced; this was Étienne Périer's Preface.

[2] *Vide* the letters of Boulliau, June 13, 1659 (IX, 202) and of Carcavi, August, 14, 1659 (VIII, 253), and compare the testimony of Marguerite and Étienne Périer (I, 134, and XII, clxxxviii; 309). "It was nevertheless during these four years of lassitude and illness," adds Etienne, "that he composed and wrote down all that we possess of this work that he was meditating."

[3] His niece Marguerite tells us (I, 134) that he never used to forget anything, and never had forgotten anything that he wanted to retain, and that he was accustomed to preserve in his memory the ideas of all the writings he planned until he had perfected them.

# VI

## PASCAL'S METHOD

*All is one, all is diverse.*[1]

Upon entering one of our old French cathedrals—Amiens, Paris, Chartres or Bourges, we are at once struck by an impression of grandeur, beauty and power, which varies with each one of them. The impression may be deepened and made more definite when we come to analyse its detail, but such analysis is not essential to the impression created in our minds. Whence comes it then? From the fact that the work of art is a whole, and reveals its unity at the first glance. We immediately perceive the *idea* that has inspired its design, and directed the organisation of the material used and the arrangement of the details, which come forward as if on their own initiative to take their place in the whole they are to form. There are of course many different points whence this whole may be viewed in perspective, and it is well to study the building from each of them in turn. When at the front, I came to know Amiens cathedral in a great variety of aspects, both outside and inside, and I was particularly fond of a certain spot at the top of the left aisle near the transept, from which the architectural lines might be seen combining in a complex harmony, melting into the purple light from the old stained-glass windows of the apse. But wherever we may place ourselves, and whatever part of the cathedral we study, if we would comprehend its beauty we must never lose sight of it as a whole, for each detail serves but to explain it in its entirety. These columns, these arches, these ribs, have an architectural *raison d'être*; these windows, these statues have their appointed place in the edifice; this Last Judgment is placed here because it is here that the setting sun is seen; each detail is a symbol, and all have their own significance. Thus the cathedral is *unity* and *plurality*; akin in that respect to a perfect society, for "plurality which cannot be reduced to unity is confusion; unity which does not depend on plurality is tyranny"[1] or mere system. The cathedral offers us the unlimited multiplicity, the inexhaustible wealth and diversity of a world, but a world ordered by a central idea, born of an aspiration of the soul applied to a definite material. The gothic vault is at once the solution of a constructional problem and a prayer of the soul. Now this plural unity, or single plurality, must "at once" be "taken in with one look," it must "in a moment" be "seen with a single glance," yet so carefully that it is possible to separate all "its numerous and subtle" elements, for "the omission of a single element leads to error."[2]

---

[1] *116.* This profoundly Pascalian idea should be compared with Plato's similar formula in the *Philebus* (14D-17A) on the subject of the ἓν καὶ πολλά: it is, he says, a tradition of divine origin, to which we owe all that mankind has discovered, that all beings that may be said to be immortal (Ideas) are a compound of unity and of multiplicity.

The *Pensées* resemble a cathedral, an unfinished cathedral, or, if you prefer, something like the imposing ruins of Rheims. Every fragment of Pascal's work, like every detail and every stone of the buildings raised by the unknown artists of the Middle Ages, contributes to the whole, and to be properly appreciated and understood should be brought into relation with the whole. We shall not be surprised, therefore, to find here all the materials that we have seen Pascal collecting. We recognize them all; yet now that they are ordered by the genius of the architect to the *end* which confers meaning on them, they appear new to us. And why? Because there is an *order* in their arrangement, and this order is of much more importance than the materials themselves.

---

[1] *871*; applied by Pascal to the Church and to the Pope. cf. the fragments *874* (unity and plurality), *11*, *115*, *116* (all is one, and all is diverse). Though one and diverse, Pascal's method is equally removed from empiricism and from systematization.

[2] *1*, *3*. (The mathematical mind contrasted with the intuitive mind.)

> "Let none declare that I have said nothing new, for the arrangement of my matter is new. When two people play tennis, both play with the same ball, but one places it better.
>
> "People might just as well say that I have used words that are not new. As if the same thoughts, by being arranged differently, did not form a different discourse, just as the same words, differently arranged, make different thoughts!" (*22*).

It is, then, the order that is new, and that explains all the rest. And what is this order? How are we to discover it?

In spite of a few scattered indications, Pascal did not tell us definitely what the order, or rather, the plan of his Apology for Christianity was to be. He developed it in a

---

[1] General indications: *187* (*Arrangement.* Men despise religion; they hate it, and fear it may be true. To remedy this we must begin by showing that religion is not contrary to reason; then that it is venerable, to give respect for it; then we must make it lovable, to make good men hope that that it may be true; and finally we must show that it *is* true. Venerable, because it has known man well; lovable, because it promises the true good). *60* (*First Part*: Man's wretchedness without God. *Second Part:* Man's happiness with God. Or else *Pt. I.* That nature is corrupt. Through nature itself. *Pt. II.* That there is a Redeemer. By the Scriptures); *62* (*Preface to Pt. I*); *242* (*Preface to Pt. II*), *425* (*Pt. II. That man without faith cannot know the true good, or justice*). Special indications: *74* (*A letter on the folly of human knowledge and philosophy.* This letter before the *diversion*). *291* (In the letter *on injustice*). *423* (*Contradictions. After having shown the littleness and the greatness of man*). *433* (After having understood the whole nature of man). *184* (Letter to lead to the search after God). *246* (*Arrangement.* After the letter "that we ought to seek God" put the letter "on removing obstacles," which is the discourse on the "machine," to prepare the machine, to seek by reason). *247* (*Arrangement.* A letter of encouragement to a friend to lead him to seek . . . ). *248* (*Letter showing the value of proofs by the machine*). Lastly, the fragment *430* (*Port Royal, The beginning, after having explained the incomprehensibility. To Port Royal for to-morrow. Prosopopœa.*) very probably represents the "sketch" of the statement Pascal made at Port Royal "in the presence and at the desire of several important people among his friends," and in which, according to Étienne Périer, "he explained to them in a few words the plan of the whole work, told them what its subject-matter was to be, gave an abridged account of its reasons and theories, and explained the order and arrangement of the matters of which he was going to treat." This fragment should be compared with Périer and Filleau de la Chaise's account of the statement, and with the plan outlined by Mme Périer (XII, intro. pp. 180-199, 199-238, 241-246), although these documents are far from tallying, and after interminable arguments the problem of the *plan* of the Apology is still without a solution.

few words in the oral statement made to some of his friends, with which, despite their prudence, "they were delighted." This is the explicit testimony of Filleau de la Chaise, who adds: "All that M. Pascal said then is still present to their minds." In any case, if Pascal's *aim* was quite clear in his mind, it is hardly probable that at that date (that is, about 1658) he had already definitely fixed the *plan* of the great work he was meditating, work of which he often said "that it would require ten years of good health to complete" (XII, 190); there is even reason to believe that he died before he had settled it, as some of his marginal notes seem to indicate. "The last thing we decide on in writing a book is what we shall put at the beginning" (*19*).

It is therefore, useless to try to reconstruct the plan of the *Apology*. On the other hand, we do know very definitely, and from Pascal himself, how we ought to regard the order of a work like his, and the nature of that order.

"We ought to see the thing in a moment and with a single glance, and not by a process of reasoning, at least up to a certain point," says Pascal, speaking of matters in which intuition is needed, the "*choses de finesse*."[1] In like manner, the order should be grasped at one glance. Our view of it must be whole, not fragmentary, synthetic rather than analytic; one which we feel rather than see. Let us avoid thinking, however, that this order, which should be perceived "with one look," can be apprehended with only one look, on a single occasion. There are many points of view, perspectives from which the whole may be regarded, and these seem to multiply its unity proportionately;[2] it is well, it is even necessary, to see it thus, and it is highly probable that Pascal himself, had he finished his work, would have *returned to the same subjects many times over, but making them*

---

[1] This is what certain marginal indications seem to infer; e.g., "Transfer to the next heading, after laws" *73*.

[2] We know how much importance Pascal attached to perspective, and the place this question occupies in his thought from the *Essai pour les coniques* to his *Adresse à l'Académie parisienne* (III, 307). There is no doubt that his conception of perspective influenced his conception of order.

*appear every time in a fresh perspective, or in a new light.*[1] And the reason of it is that there is here no question of a logical sequence, developing in a single dimension and according to one line of thought, like a chain of syllogisms placed end to end. No; we must "see all sides of it"(*9*); we must look at the height, breadth and depth, in every direction and in all perspectives;[2] for one perspective will draw together on our plane of vision, will make us see as a whole, elements which another will disperse, although all, in fact, are bound together, *since all relate to one and the same end.*

This is precisely what true arrangement is—that which makes the end visible. Pascal defined it with a clarity which leaves nothing to be desired:

> *Arrangement. Against the objection that the Scripture has no arrangement or order.*—The heart has its order; the mind has its own, which is the order of theory and demonstration; the heart has yet another. We do not prove that we should be loved, by enumerating in order the causes of love; that would be absurd.
>
> Jesus Christ and St. Paul use the order of charity, not that of the intellect, for they desire to kindle ardour, not to instruct; it is the same with St. Augustine. This order consists mainly in dwelling on each point that may illustrate the end in view, so that it is ever before us.(*283*).

This order of the heart, or charity, which always keeps the end in sight, and refers everything to that end, is the order which Pascal followed, and which we must follow, or rediscover if we would understand his thought. This thought is not arranged systematically, and for that reason it is less easy to expound. But it is infinitely richer in points of view, more like life itself and more permanent than any system of thought. A system is subject to the advance of age, and it ages quickly, being composed of much that is artificial, forced, or bound up with the thought of an individual or of an epoch.[1] A work of beauty, a work of truth, above all—and this word includes all the rest—a work of *charity*, remains for ever young; the advance of age cannot touch it. Each apprehends it according to his own point of view, and all can take something from it; the masses, the half-educated, the clever, the simple-minded and the savant, the sceptic (*pyrrhonien*) and the dogmatist, the unbeliever and the devout alike. But it is only the "perfect Christians" who comprehend it perfectly because they see it in its true light. The further one advances in the interior life and the more one discovers, in such a work, things previously unperceived, the more does one realize its justice and its profundity. In contrast with the productions of the mind the work of charity is only really comprehended by those who themselves practise charity and make it a reality in their lives. This is true of the *Pensées*.

---

[1] This is very clearly brought out in Filleau's de la Chaise's exposition, and implies Pascal's own conception of dialectics (*328, 337*). cf. Strowski, III, p. 310.

[2] Nevertheless, as Pascal remarks elsewhere (*381*), "there is but one precise point from which to look . . . Perspective determines that precise point in the art of painting. But who shall determine it in truth or morals?

If we want to account for the way in which a cathedral has been built, we must necessarily know both the *aim* of the architect, and the *means* at his disposal, for these cannot be separated. It is the same with Pascal. His method was only the adaptation of the means at his disposal to the end he proposed to attain. Before defining this method, then, we must study the end and the means.

The end Pascal had in view was not a purely speculative end, like that at which most philosophers aim; it was an end which was at once speculative and *practical*, in the highest and strongest sense of the word, a moral and religious sense. Moreover he very clearly subordinated speculation to practice, that is, to the salvation of souls. Pascal's design was to show men their true end.

Now it cannot de disputed that "man is born for pleasure" (*Discours*, III, 126; 128), that, "notwithstanding his miseries, he wishes to be happy, and wishes for happiness only, and he is unable to wish otherwise" (*169*). "All men seek happiness; to this rule there is no exception; however different the means they employ for this purpose, all tend toward this goal. . . The will never takes the smallest step except towards this object. It is the motive of all the actions of all men, not excepting those who are going to hang themselves." Yet nevertheless it is a fact, and an equally undeniable fact, that "no one as yet, without faith, has ever arrived at the goal to which all eyes are continually turned. All alike complain, rulers and subjects, nobles and commoners, old and young, strong and weak, learned and ignorant, sound and sick; men of all countries, all times, all ages, and all conditions," a proof of our powerlessness "to arrive at good by our own efforts" (*425*).

---

[1] We recall Pascal's remarks about those "who make false windows for the sake of symmetry" (*27*).

"What then do this yearning and this impotence cry aloud to us? Surely, that there was once in man a true happiness, of which there now remains to him only the impression, the empty outline, which he vainly tries to fill from all that surrounds him, seeking from things absent the succour that he cannot get from things present; but none of them can help him, for the infinite gulf can be filled only by an infinite, immutable, object, that is, only by God Himself. He alone is his true good" (*425*).

"It is God alone who should be the final end, as He alone is the true beginning." God is the object to which the soul aspires, and it aspires "to reach Him only through means which come from God Himself, because it desires that He shall Himself be its way, its object and its final end."[1] How can it be otherwise? "If man be not made for God, how is it that he is not happy save in God?" (*438*). Man, therefore, must be shown that he cannot be happy except in God,

---

[1] These passages are taken from Pascal's letter to Mme Périer of April 1, 1648 (written in Jacqueline's hand) II, 250; 89), and his discourse on the conversion of the sinner (X, 426; 200) cf. *488*: "But it is not possible that God can ever be the end if He be not the beginning also."

"that our true felicity is to be in Him, and our sole misery to be separated from Him" (*430*).

God is man's final end, since God alone can wholly fill his heart. But who is there that recognizes this truth? "It is truly deplorable to see all men studying only the means, never the end" (*98*). They follow the custom of the day, they amuse themselves, they let themselves be beguiled by appearances and blind themselves by most terrible hallucination. For since man has forsaken his true good, "it is a curious fact that there is nothing in nature which has not at some time served to take its place: stars, heaven, earth, elements, plants, cabbages, leeks, animals, insects, calves, serpents, fever, pestilence, famine, vice, adultery, incest." To a humanity which does not accept revelation, everything becomes God, as Bossuet[1] says, except God Himself. And thus, since men have lost the true good, "some seek it in authority, others in research and knowledge, and others again in voluptuous pleasures" (*425*). And not one is satisfied, but throughout their lives all continue an unwearied pursuit of an expected end that is never attained.

How strange is such blindness! Imagine "a man in a cell, not knowing whether his doom is pronounced, having but one hour to learn it, and this hour sufficing him, should he know that it is fixed, to secure its repeal," and yet "employing this last hour, not in learning his sentence, but in playing piquet" (*200*). People "deliberate on the way to spend a single hour" (*219*) without caring about what is to follow it, and the only question of real importance to man is the one which he will never consider, just as the only good that can satisfy him is the very one that he never seeks: at any rate, this is true of the majority.[2]

Now this state of affairs should not be, for it is contrary to all reason. Man must be induced to reflect. He must be shown the wrong and folly and blindness of one who goes through life ignorant of his destiny, and elects to remain in this state of ignorance. He must be shown that the only true good is in God. If he does not know it, or if he doubts it, at any rate *let him look into the matter*. The only ill for which there is no remedy is indifference, but the indifferent attitude is also the most irrational. "To rest content with ignorance is a monstrous thing, and they who live thus ought to be made aware of their surpassing folly" (*195*). Must we not have lost our senses if we remain indifferent to what happens to us after death, since upon this matter our whole conduct depends, and "all our thoughts and actions must take such widely differing directions, according as eternal happiness may be hoped for or not?" Here is a man who spends all his days and nights "in rage and despair on account of the loss of some office, or about some imaginary offence against his honour"; and this same man, enclosed within the infinites that encompass him on all sides, "like an atom and like a shadow which lasts only for a moment and never returns," this man will never ask himself whence he comes or whither he is tending or what awaits him at death Let us not imagine that the question does not present itself, for indeed it does; "there is nothing more real than that, nothing more terrible." To fail to realize it, and to fail to realize how unhappy man is without God, is a sign of extreme mental weakness and also of extreme cowardice, for "nothing is more cowardly than to defy God." Note the men who are doubters, who deny that the question arises, who condemn us to nothingness and call that "throwing off the yoke." Question them, and "they will offer you such feeble and unworthy arguments that they will persuade you of the contrary." This is what someone said to them one day very appositely: "If you go on talking like that, you will indeed convert me" (XIII, 111; 422). Of such are those who in our own day presume to substitute for the immortality of the soul the immortality of the species or of the *germen*; and those again who assert that by making modifications in human nature, by shortening man's intestine, for instance, one could lengthen his life, and, by awakening in him the desire for death, destroy his instinct of immortality, the source of all religious belief. But this *instinct* in him is the strongest of all;[1] it gives the lie to those who deny it, and the very vehemence of their denials proves the truth of what they are denying, a truth which men have always believed or sought, which cannot be a mere product of the imagination. Let anyone show us, either in our physical or moral constitution, a single one among our tendencies that aims at nothingness and has no object! Thus the question does present itself, and none can escape it. Let us seek, therefore, says Pascal, for it is "an indispensable duty." Let man have pity on himself; let him at any rate take a few steps forward to try and find enlightenment; let him give to this thought some of the hours that he employs so unprofitably in other things. Perhaps he will encounter something; and if to his search he brings "a perfect sincerity and a true desire to encounter truth" let him not despair, for his search will not be in vain.[2]

---

[1] *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, Pt II, ch. iii.

[2] *Vide* the whole of the superb fragment *194*, intended to serve as a preface, as its last words indicate. All that follows is taken from this fragment, and from fragment *195*.

Pascal assuredly knew that the desire for faith is not enough of itself to give it; grace alone can produce the true and salutary effect. He knew that faith differs from proof; the one is human, the other a gift from God, not bestowed by the reason. God alone can bestow it on the soul, through the heart, for we do not enter upon truth save by charity.[3] But man can and should *dispose himself* to meet it, for "He who has created us without our aid cannot save us without it" (XI, 128), and if it be true that grace alone can effect salvation, it is also true that salvation cannot be effected without man's co-operation (XI, 195).

---

[1] *395;* "*Instinct* . . . idea of truth."

[2] *194:* XIII, 113; 423. In passing, let us note these touching words, so thoroughly human, so little "Jansenist" in tone; referring to those who live without knowing God and without seeking Him: "It needs all the charity of the religion they despise, not to despise them so utterly as to abandon them to their folly. But since this religion obliges us always to look on them, while they are in this life, as capable of receiving illuminating grace, and to believe that in a short time they can be more filled with faith than ourselves, while we on the other hand can fall into their present state of blindness, we must do for them what we would that they should do for us, were we in their place, and entreat them to take pity on themselves, and advance at least a few steps to try to find enlightenment."

[3] *245, 248, 279, 282. De l'art de persuader*, IX, 272; 185. cf. *Écrits sur la grâce*, XI, 128 *et seq.*

This is exactly what Pascal's task was to be[1]—to set the will to work, to lead man to seek God, to awaken in him unrest and anxiety about his destiny,[2] to exhort him to emerge from his state of ignorance, and above all, from his contentment with that ignorance, his strange sloth and appalling indifference in matters that touch him most nearly, for there is no doubt that those who live in such a state "are merely dissembling, and are not actually indifferent" (XIII, 109;421). Then, after having shown him "that man must seek God," we must try "to remove the obstacles"—that is, prepare the machine, bend the automaton, teach man to fall on his knees. Then, and then alone, can man effectively "seek by reason" and "open his mind to proofs"; then proofs will have power to convince him, and they will be capable of becoming the instrument of faith, the faith given by God to those who seek Him, but refused to those who tempt Him. "Men despise religion; they hate it and fear that it may be true. To remedy this we must begin by showing that religion is not contrary to reason; then that it is worthy of veneration, to give respect for it; then we must show it lovable, to make good men hope that it is true; and lastly show that it *is* true. It should be venerated, for it knows the heart of man well; and it is to be loved because it promises the true good."[3]

Such was the end which Pascal proposed to himself. Let us note, with Filleau de la Chaise (XII, cc-cciii), that his design was not only to disabuse the world of an infinity of errors and teach it as many truths; he desired to touch men's hearts, that they might desire, seek, feel, love and practise good: for it is not enough to establish the truth; men must be made to accept it. Now what means had Pascal at his disposal to attain this end? He had all his experience as a savant, a man, and a Christian.[1] This experience was unusually rich and profound, as we already know. It will be enough here to make some sort of inventory of its resources.

---

[1] On this subject see *184, 246, 247, 250, 252.*

[2] "To be at ease is to be unsafe," was a profound saying of Newman's.

[3] *187.*

1. First of all there was science, which Pascal knew, not after the fashion of those who learn it by rote, but like the infinitely rarer class of people who learn it by creating it. Science had revealed to Pascal that *reality infinitely surpasses our conceptions of it.*

The whole of *mathematics* is based upon the idea of the *infinite.* "There is not a geometer who does not believe that space can be divided and subdivided an infinite number of times. Without this theory he can no more be a geometer than a man can be a man without a soul. Nevertheless not one of the geometers comprehends an infinite division." What is more astonishing indeed, than to admit that a small space may have as many parts as a large one? But what is more absurd than to maintain, on the other hand, that by dividing and subdividing a space we arrive at last at "indivisibles," that is, at spatial nothingness? Let us conclude, and it is a point of capital importance, "that it is not by our capacity for conceiving these things that we ought to judge of their truth" (*L'Esprit géométrique*, IX, 259-60; 178).

Geometry, "that wonderful science," revealed to him "properties common to all things, the knowledge of which opens the mind to the greatest marvels in nature. The chief one comprises the two infinites to be found in all; the infinitely great and the infinitely little" (IX, 255-6; 173-4). And this primary conception of the two infinites is closely bound up with that of the *discontinuity* or *heterogeneity of orders.*

To explain this let us recall the conclusion to which Pascal had been led by the study of the arithmetical triangle and its applications to the summing of a numerical series and the determination of curvilinear areas, which contain in germ the whole theory of infinitesimal analysis. The principle upon which it rests is the following: "*A continuous magnitude of a given order is not increased if there be added to it, up to any required number, magnitudes of a lower order of infinity.* Thus, points add nothing to lines, or lines to surfaces, or surfaces to solids, or (to speak of numbers as befits an arithmetical treatise), roots do not count in relation to squares, squares in relation to cubes, cubes in relation to fourth powers; so that magnitudes of a lower order should be neglected as of no account".[1]

---

[1] The MS. of *268* bears these words, deleted by Pascal: "One must have these three qualities, Pyrrhonist, geometer, submissive Christian."

From several points of view this passage is noteworthy, and deserves a pause. We might, without too much difficulty, give a mathematical proof of it, or rather, an illustration, recalling the method Pascal used for finding the area of the parabola.[2] But the point that mainly interests us here is the conclusions he drew from it; to use the expression he made use of in another connection with regard to Descartes, "the wonderful series of consequences" he was able to perceive in it through one of those intuitions which will not be surprising to any who have experienced the joy of discovery or of true comprehension. The discontinuity of orders, the heterogeneity of one order of magnitude compared with a lower order or its elements, the twofold infinity manifested in all orders—all this is in germ and, as it were, prefigured in these lines.

[1] *Reliqua facili negotio penetrantur, eo posito principio,* in continua quantitate, quotlibet quantitates cujusvis generis quantitati superioris generis additas nihil ei superaddere. *Sic puncta lineis, lineæ superficiebus, superficies solidis nihil adjiciunt; seu—ut numericis, in numerico tractatu, verbis utar—radices quadratis, quadrata cubis, cubi quadrato-quadratis, etc., nihil apponunt. Quare inferiores gradus, nullius valoris existentes, non considerandi sunt.* (*Potestatum numericarum summa,* treatise composed about 1654 and published in 1655, following the *Treatise on the arithmetrical triangle, III,* 366.) In the phrase italicised [in the English] I have corrected the translation given by Brunschvicg, III, 367; for the *quantitas superioris generis* denotes, in the original text, not the magnitudes added, but the magnitude to which one adds; this is of a higher order of infinity, the others are of a lower order. Strowski has clearly shown the fundamental importance of this text (II, 287, 314); according to his own account (*Correspondant,* Nov. 25th, 1921, p. 710) it was revealed to him by Duhem, who had an extremely intimate knowledge of Pascal.

[2] Appendix I.

In fact, observes Pascal just after the passage quoted, "I was anxious to add these few remarks, which will already be familiar to those working upon indivisibles, so as to bring into prominence the admirable connection that Nature, always inclined to unity, establishes between things apparently remote from each other. It appears again in this instance, in which we find the calculation of the *dimensions of continuous functions* connected with the *summation of numerical powers*."[1] It was to appear later to Pascal in the discontinuity of orders. He did indeed realize that there are *various orders of infinity*, such that some are to others mere ciphers, that "a unit added to infinity does not increase it, any more than would one foot added to an infinite length," that "the finite is annihilated in presence of the infinite and becomes nullity" (*233*), as an infinite of the first order, (as would be said after his day),[2] is annihilated before an infinite of the second order, and that in its turn before one of the third order. From this idea he finally rose to the stupendous idea of the disproportion between bodies and minds, between minds and charity, between our justice and Divine justice. "All the bodies in the universe cannot give rise to even the least of minds; and with all that minds can produce, they can never give rise to the least impulse of charity (*793*).

And now we see that from this revelation of the discontinuity of orders there arises another staggering view—that of the twofold infinity in nature; of that nature which is wholly contained in the intermediate, having its whole being between the infinitely great and the infinitely little, without ever attaining either of these "infinitely different" extremes, which none the less are "relative to one another," uniting in God, and in God alone. Each order is in fact comparable only with itself, the finite with the finite, the infinitely little with the infinitely little, so that we traverse an infinity of divisibles in an infinity of instants, and a finite space in a finite time (*L'Esprit géométrique*, IX, 261-2; 179). Let us consider an indivisible, for instance, with respect to space.[1] It differs from it, not only in name, but also in kind, like zero with respect to numbers, for this indivisible, multiplied as many times as you like, can never make more than one single indivisible, never a space. And we shall find the same relation "between rest and movement, and between one instant and an age; for all these things are heterogeneous to their magnitudes, because even if multiplied to infinity, they can never make anything but indivisibles, any more than the indivisibles of space, and for the same reason. And then we shall find a perfect correspondence between things, for all these magnitudes can be infinitely divided, without arriving at their indivisibles, so that they occupy all the intermediate between the infinite and nothingness" (IX, 268; 183). This may be proved once more by showing that every movement, number, space, time, however great it may be, can be increased without arriving at the infinitely great, and however little it may be, can be diminished without arriving at the infinitely little, that is, at rest, zero, the indivisible, the instant, "so that all are suspended in the intermediate between the infinite and nothingness, being always infinitely remote from both extremes" (IX, 256; 174). And "those who clearly perceive these truths will be able to admire the greatness and the power of nature in this twofold infinity that surrounds us on all hands, and learn through contemplation of this wonder to know themselves, finding themselves placed between an infinity and nothingness in space, number, movement, and time. In realizing this we may learn to estimate ourselves at our true worth, and conceive thoughts that are worth more than the whole of geometry itself" (IX, 269-70; 184).

---

[1] *Hæc, quæ indivisibilium studiosis familiaria sunt, subjungere placuit, ut nunquam satis mirata connexio, qua ea etiam quae remotissima videntur in unum addicat unitatis amatrix natura, ex hoc exemplo prodeat, in quo, quantitatis continuæ dimensionem, cum numericarum potestatum summa conjunctam contemplari licet.* (III. 366. End of the *Potestatum numericarum summa*).

[2] Cournot has satisfactorily demonstrated in this connection "that the distinction between the various orders of infinity, of greatness and of smallness, must not be relegated to the category of artificial or conventional abstractions, for it is inherent in the nature of things, and the intellect cannot arrive at a just interpretation of natural phenomena without it." Thus, he says, "when the linear dimensions of some mass of land or of water increase by thousands of metres, the surfaces increase by millions of square metres, and the volumes by thousands of millions of cubic metres, and the more the numbers in the first series increase, the more disproportionate they are to the corresponding numbers in the second series, and these to the corresponding numbers of the third. This is what causes geometers to say that an infinite of the first order in the first series corresponds with an infinite of the second order in the second series, and with an infinite of the third order in the third series;" *op. cit.* I, pp. 272-4.

---

[1] Let us remember that the *indivisibles*, in Cavalieri's (really incorrect) terminology of 1635, correspond with our *infinitesimals*. They denote "the lines, surfaces or elementary volumes which decrease indefinitely in proportion as tneir number increases indefinitely." (Hatzfeld, *Pascal*, p. 166). In the fragmentary *Esprit géométrique*, Pascal criticizes the *atomist interpretation* of the doctrine of indivisibles. See Appendix I.

If I have emphasized this point, which is of extreme importance, it is that I may show, by means of a definite example, all the advantage Pascal derived from his mathematical discoveries and reflections. We should arrive at similar conclusions by taking as our starting-point his researches into *probability*, which are, besides, very closely bound up with the problem of the different orders of infinity.[1] We shall see, in fact, how Pascal in his argument on the wager, applies the rule of chances to the problem under consideration—to bet for, or against, God. We shall show how his views of chance and probability, which contained the germ of an entirely fresh process of reasoning, led him to discern, in the "convergence of probabilities" apart from chance, the true method of knowledge.

It will suffice to note here the point to which these Pascalian doctrines lead. It will suffice, too, to recall the way in which *physics* revealed to Pascal another of his basic principles—the *supremacy of experience*. His opponents had denied the very possibility of the existence of a vacuum, founding their denial on a metaphysical system. Let us consult the facts, said Pascal, and if facts demonstrate that a vacuum exists, it must be possible, and the system by virtue of which it is denied is false.[1] When fact and theory are conflicting, the theory must give way to the fact, for experiments, he writes in his brief *Treatise on the Vacuum* (II, 136; 78) are the sole principles of physics. They alone give us an intelligent understanding of nature; when theories compete they alone give the casting-vote and decide which is the true one. The proper rôle of reason then is not to build up the theories, but to recognize the facts. Its work is not to reconstruct reality, but to submit to it as it is, for reality is the work of a more mighty hand than our own. "Submission and use of reason, in which true Christianity consists" (*269*).

---

[1] This is fully recognized by Cournot (*op. cit*, I, p. 276). "There exists an intimate association between the mathematical theory of chance and the conception of the infinite in greatness and smallness." And he gives some extremely suggestive examples: the probability of hitting on a determined element in a series of numbers compared with the probability of hitting on a determined binary combination; the chance that a billiard ball will touch the cushion at the the mathematical point where it is divided into two exactly equal parts, compared with the chance that the ball will stop short at the exact centre of the table. This last is "the impossible within the impossible; it is a single chance against a number of chances which is infinite—contained indeed among the infinites of the second order; it is an infinitely small probability of the second order."

2. But Pascal was not merely a geometer and a physicist; he was a *gentleman* (*honnête homme*). His ideas, for the most part, were "thoughts arising out of the ordinary conversations of life" (*18*). He had lived in the world, and known men's feelings, passions, prejudices, their instability and their restlessness, and the reasons for all this, as well as the hidden springs of all their acts and arguments, just as well as he knew the way in which men could be influenced. "I had spent many years in the study of the abstract sciences," he says, "and had been much discouraged at finding how very little intercourse I could have with others on these subjects. When I began the study of man, I realized that these abstract sciences were not his proper sphere, and that in investigating them I was wandering further from my true state, than others in ignoring them" (*144*). He did perceive, however, that the science of man is still more unknown than that of geometry—is it, perhaps, better for man, if he wants to be happy, not to know too much about himself? At any

---

[1] Equally false is any system which, while taking account of the fact is not the system that the fact requires, but that which is imposed on us by our own prejudices. "When we have become accustomed to make use of bad reasons to prove natural effects, we no longer wish to receive good ones when they are discovered. The example given was the circulation of the blood, to explain why the vein swells above the ligature" (*96*). To account for this afflux of blood, nature's abhorrence of a vacuum was quoted against Harvey.

rate, Pascal realized that for living among men, the *true science* is that of man, and the *true method* is not by way of demonstration, which is too rigid and wholly external, but the method which can perceive the complexity of principles and the differences between individuals, and which, by a kind of secret "correspondence" or "community of understanding" can enter into human feelings and force men to look within themselves, and to find in their inmost heart the truth of which he was speaking (*1*, *7*, *14*, *15*).

3. And finally, this scientist, this man, was also a humble Christian. To his experience of men and of the world he added a deeper experience, and this, if we may put it thus, was the *experience of God*. Pascal "thirsted for spiritual things, thirsted for righteousness" (*264*); Pascal sought, Pascal believed, Pascal lived on his faith and by his faith, and this knowledge and this life of faith gave him the key to all things, because they revealed to him the *end* and the *beginning* of all. Thus he raised himself to the *order of charity*, or rather made himself worthy of it, for he knew how "to offer himself through humiliations to the inspirations which alone can produce a true and salutary effect" (*245*). By this light, which is the light of charity, all falls into its right place and all is explained, because the end teaches us the *meaning* of all the rest, and how *to make use* of it that we may attain to truth, to goodness, to blessedness.

Such were the means at Pascal's disposal; how did he adapt them to the end he had in view? In other words, what was his method to be?

The first to present itself to him was the *geometrical method*, the perfect model of the art of defining and demonstrating, the order of which is the most perfect that can exist among men (*Esprit géométrique*, IX, 247; 168). Pascal esteemed it highly. "What is above geometrical principles is above us," he wrote (IX, 242; 194), and in another place: "An infallible method is the object of all men's search. Logicians claim that they can arrive at it, but the geometers are the only ones who do attain it, and outside their own science and what copies it they have no true proofs" (*Art de persuader* IX, 287; 194). In fact, the rules it makes use of are "simple, ingenuous, natural" as all true rules should be; they are not, like the *barbara* and *baralipton* of the logicians, the cause of any mental strain; and above all they give us an infallible method of distinguishing the true from the false, they definitely fix the road we must follow to reach our goal; this is of the utmost importance, for if we hold truth in the same hand as a host of errors, without being able to distinguish them, we lose our grasp of it. "In a mixture containing a quantity of useless or poisonous herbs the good ones will have no effect" (IX, 288; 195). But this geometrical method, however perfect it be, whatever help it may lend us in our demonstrations, is not enough for man. It appeals to the understanding only, and if we desire happiness the will must be touched (*Art de persuader* IX, 271-4; 184-6). Still more, it is not self-sufficing; it is dependent on premisses that it does not know, can neither define nor prove, and this by reason of their "excessive natural clarity, which convinces the reason more powerfully than argument" (*Esprit géométrique*, IX, 257; 175). Geometry therefore, must make its appeal to a different kind of consciousness from argument, and this is what Pascal calls "the light of nature," or more simply still, "nature" (IX, 246-7; 168. cf. *Pensées 434*). This is the reason why geometers who are geometers and nothing else, accustomed to the precise, distinct statements of geometry, do not see what is before them and are lost, in matters demanding intuition (*les choses de finesse*), wherein the premisses do not admit of such treatment (*1*). To conclude: the geometrical method is most useful; in contrast with logic it "preserves order" because it points out the manner in which truths give birth to one another and are linked together in nature. But it is "useless fundamentally" (*61*). Why? Because it does not touch man, or give him any information on the one thing that matters to him—his end.

To be able to gain the advantage over man we must needs have recourse to another method. To the art of defining and demonstrating we must add yet another—the *art of persuading*, that is, the art of making argument acceptable and of convincing (IX, 271, 275-6; 184, 187-8). This art "is necessarily related to the way in which men give their consent to what is laid before them, as well as to the conditions laid down in the matters we would have them believe." It is incomparably more delicate and subtle, according as its object becomes more complicated and varied. Here, especially in making things acceptable, even more than in convincing, there are no hard and fast rules, or, if there should be any rules, and possibly these are the true ones,[1] they cannot be formulated, for their application varies with individuals, with the point of view we take, and with the theories to which we must adapt ourselves, if we desire to make others comprehend. Now, "the more intellectual we are ourselves, the more originality do we discover in others" (*7*). Men are by no means ordinary organs; to play upon them we must know where the stops are (*111*).

---

[1] Pascal indeed observes (IX, 276; 188): "It is not that I do not believe that the rules for pleasing are just as definite as those for proving . . . but I am of opinion (and perhaps it is my weakness that makes me think so), that it is impossible to attain them," or, at any rate, "extremely difficult" to do so. It is in this way, it seems to me, that the very obscure passage "*Géométrie, finesse*," should be explained: "True eloquence makes light of eloquence, true morality makes light of morality, that is to say, the morality of the judgment makes light of the morality of the mind, which has no rules" (*4*). *Judgment*, "to which perception belongs" is the faculty of direct apprehension and appreciation, which (in this passage at any rate) is opposed to the *intellect*, from which "knowledge" is derived, just as intuition (*finesse*) is opposed to geometry (*4*). And this judgment does conform to rules, which are like "a watch" to the mind (*5*), and are themselves modelled upon a higher reality, apprehended by the heart, one in principle, but diverse in its manifestatons cf. this very significant passage from Mme Périer's Life of Pascal (I, 72): "He had made for himself very special rules of oratory, which still further increased his natural gift . . . He conceived that the art of speaking consisted in certain conditions which ought to prevail between the hearts and minds of those one is addressing on the one hand, and the thoughts and expressions used by the speaker, but that these do not enter into their true proportions except by the turn given to them. For this reason he studied deeply men's hearts and minds; he knew to perfection all the hidden springs that move them. When he was reflecting upon some matter, he would put himself in the place of those who were to listen to his discourse upon it, and after examining into all the conditions to ascertain whether they were in their true proportions, he could then see what turn to give his thoughts . . . "

And this is because "the reasons for pleasure are not fixed or stable. They differ in all men, and they vary in each particular man so much that there is no greater difference between one man and another than there is in the same person at different times. A man's pleasures are not those of a woman; the rich and the poor have different ideas of pleasure; a prince, a soldier, a merchant, a member of the middle classes, a peasant, the old, the young, the healthy, and the sick, all view it differently, and the very slightest circumstances alter their views" (IX, 276-7; 188).

In such conditions nothing is more difficult than "to show the connection between truths and their guiding principles of truth or of pleasure," since there are very few of these principles that remain stable and are never belied. All that we can say about them is that, if we are to carry our proofs through methodically and make them as convincing, well-founded and stable as possible, we must ever observe these three rules: (1) to define clearly all the terms we employ or all the names we give to things, especially if they are at all obscure or ambiguous; (2) to propound only self-evident principles or axioms, "for if the foundation be not well-laid, the structure cannot be secure"; (3) always to substitute mentally, in demonstration, the definitions for the things defined (IX, 277-282; 189-191).

Someone may be inclined to remark that these are ordinary rules, and well-known to everybody. Would to God they were! Although nothing is more useful and general, there is nothing so little known and so difficult to put into practice. Indeed, as Pascal remarks with profound truth (IX, 282-6; 191-3), there is a vast difference between a man who mentally repeats a thing without paying any attention to it, and one who comprehends it so perfectly that he has "entered into the spirit" of it, that he discerns all its principles and their consequences, and that it has made sufficient impression upon him to establish itself firmly in his mind. Between two such men there is all the difference between a man in full health and vigour and a dead man."[1] Pascal shows this apropos of Descartes' "I think, therefore I exist"; it might just as appositely be demonstrated from his own arithmetical triangle or certain of his *Pensées*.

We conclude: "Good things are the commonest of all; the only difficulty is to get to know them. And it is quite true that they are natural and within our grasp, and even familiar to everybody, but we cannot discern them" (IX, 288-9; 195). Now to *discern* or *distinguish* principles, and it is in this that method consists,[2] the geometrical mind is no longer sufficient; the intuitive mind (*esprit de finesse*) is also requisite. "It is only a question of good eyesight, but it must be good."[3]

---

[1] "Those who possess the true spirit of discernment know how much difference there is between two words that seem similar, according to the places and the circumstances in which they are uttered. Is it possible to believe that two persons who have read and learnt by heart the same book know it equally well, if the one comprehends it in such a way that he knows all its principles, realises its consequences, has answers to the objections that may be raised against it, and is conversant with it as a whole, while in the other's mind it is but empty words, and the seeds sown there, although similar to those which bear such noble products, have remained dry and infertile in the sterile mind in which they have been sown in vain?" (IX, 283: 192). . . "The same thoughts may sometimes reproduce themselves quite differently in a mind that is not their author's; though sterile on their native soil, they flourish abundantly when transplanted" (IX, 286; 194), In my *Descartes*, p. 215, n. 1, I quote and discuss the passage referring to the *Cogito*. These pages should be read in their entirety for Pascal's admirable definition of what *comprehension* means.

[2] Plato showed in like manner that the proper role of dialectic is to divide or distinguish being, according to its natural articulations (*Phædrus*, 265E, *Sophist*, 253D). To substitute for the Eleatic unity (a homogeneous confusion, whose product is a scepticism constantly reborn) the harmonious diversity of a world of articulate forms—this is the meaning of the revolution wrought by Socrates and by his great disciples Plato and Aristotle. (See my work *La notion du Nécessaire chez Aristote*, pp. 45, 53, 54.) Similarly Descartes, as I have shown elsewhere (*Descartes*, p. 196), had had the firm conviction that order is diversified by the subjects to which it is applied. He understood earlier than Pascal, though doubtless his perception was less clear, that the only method of knowing is to see; and so, even in mathematics, he attempted to bring *measure* under the supervision of *order* or arrangement—or, to use the terms of Leibniz, to bring quantity (the object of the argument) back to quality (the object of the intuition or the heart). On this last point see my *Descartes*, pp. 118, 186.

[3] Such is Mme Périer's explicit testimony, and it is of great importance for the understanding of the term *knowing* in Pascal. As Vinet in his *Études sur Blaise Pascal*, p. 103, well says: "It is not much to know God if we do not possess Him; in fact we do not know Him unless this is so, for if the whole meaning of the word *know* (*connaître*) is intellectual in certain cases, it is not so in all, and we may say that as a general rule, intellectual apprehension (*savoir*) is only the preliminary, the outer shell or the logical impress of true knowledge. Herein lies the intricacy of the *Pensées*." The use of the term *know* is in conformity with its use in the New Testament. *I Jn*, II, 2-5; *Jn*, III, 21.

The true method, therefore, will combine intuition with logic, and the intuitive mind with the geometrical mind. The latter demonstrates, proves, concludes; the former perceives at a glance the *principles* and the *order*, and it convinces.

Pascal was not satisfied with geometrical or demonstrable proofs any more than with metaphysical reasoning. "The metaphysical proofs of God's existence are so remote from men's reasoning processes, and so involved that they have little effect; if they were helpful to a few people, it would only be during the time they were being demonstrated, for an hour after these same people would be afraid they had been mistaken" (*543*. cf. *243* and *556*). Moreover, such proofs can only lead to a speculative knowledge of God. Now, to know God in such a way is "not knowing Him at all." Pascal also rejected those "common reasons which prove very little, or prove things to those only who are already persuaded of them."[1] This is because his design was not only to prove, but "to persuade and convince the mind," and still more "to touch and sway the heart." For this purpose he had to find principles as unassailable as those of the geometers, but at the same time, and primarily, capable of touching man's heart, removing the obstacles which oppose the reception of the truth, detaching him from his passions, and leading him to act and believe, or at any rate to hope in the existence of God. And since it was not so much a matter of proving God as of making Him felt, he had to "recall men's attention to their own hearts and make them begin by knowing themselves thoroughly"; they will not fail to find within themselves traces of God, for the seal that God sets upon His works is eternal and ineradicable, and at the same time they will rediscover that "feeling of the presence of God that His greatness renders constant everywhere."

We shall see how Pascal started to attain his end. Let us merely observe that this introduction is indispensable to the production of the proof. Every proposition we set out to prove is derived from two premisses—one of right, one of fact. Now the first is always propounded by the mind, the disposition. We are bound to admit the *non-impossibility* of miracles in order to recognize a miraculous *fact*, for he who refuses to accept that, whatever one may do and whatever proofs may be brought forward, will never recognize it. He who does not desire God will never find Him. It is, therefore, above all things essential to create this state of mind, to bring about a disposition towards the truth, that is, to enlighten the mind and purify the heart. "This is the reason why," says Mme. Périer of her brother, "when he had to deal with atheists, he would never begin by arguing, or by laying down the principles he was going to speak about. He wanted first of all to know whether they were seeking the truth with all their hearts, and according to their attitude in this he would act—either to help them, if they were sincere seekers, to find the light, or to dispose their minds to seek it and make it their most serious concern, before he began to instruct them, if they were desirous that his instructions should be profitable to them" (I, 80; 22).

---

[1] Filleau de la Chaise (XII, cci.) What follows is taken from the *Préface de Port-Royal* (XII, cxciv; 313) and from Filleau (XII, ccii, cciv).

Such a mental atmosphere once created, that is to say, once a man has been brought into the right mood to seek the truth, what are the proofs to offer him? *Moral* and *historical proofs*, founded on facts.[1] Here Pascal showed absolute genius; two centuries before our own day he introduced the method that Newman and Cournot were to adopt, a method in which we are only now beginning to discern the universally scientific method. I shall simply sketch it out here, and we shall study it in detail when we have to define the order of the heart.

---

[1] In his *Discours sur les Pensées de M. Pascal*, Filleau clearly recognized this. "He showed clearly that there are only moral and historical proofs and certain feelings arising out of human nature and experience that are within the scope (of human beings); and he led them to see that it is only upon proofs of this kind that things recognized throughout the world as certain are founded. And as a matter of fact, that there is a city called Rome, that Mahomet did actually exist, that the Fire of London did really take place—there might be some difficulty in proving all these things; nevertheless it would be folly to doubt them or to be afraid to risk one's life upon their certainty, however little there might be to gain. The ways in which we acquire this kind of certainty, although not geometrical, are none the less certain, and should no less induce us to act upon them, and it is really only upon this sort of certainty that we act in nearly all matters " (XII, cciii-iv). This passage, which clearly bears Pascal's imprint, is very noteworthy, both for the use made of the terms "moral and historical proofs," "nature," "experience," and for the incidental allusion to the argument on the wager, and also for the extremely correct view—a new one at that period—of the real methods of securing certainty. It is a curious

While the majority "constitute themselves supreme judges in all matters upon the very limited number of principles they possess," that is, in short, "upon principles of man's invention and consequently suspect," Pascal bases his upon *facts, which are the work of God,*[1] and thus, "whatever is offered them as proof being of the nature of facts, i.e., statements capable of affording complete certainty of evidence, both reason and common sense oblige them to begin with these, and, if they find them convincing, they conclude that they were mistaken in their own opinions" (XII, ccxxxvi, ccxvi). Who would dare to plume himself on knowing thoroughly the full extent of God's power? Reason is not superior to facts, but facts surpass reason (XII, cxcvii). It is the latter that must yield; submitting to the facts, even when they exceed reason—this is the right course for reason to pursue (*276-272*).

Here are the main features of the Pascalian dialectic.

"It is one of man's natural shortcomings to believe that he possesses a direct knowledge of the truth, and hence he is always inclined to deny everything that he cannot understand, whilst as a matter of fact his only natural knowledge is illusory, and he must regard as true only those things the contrary of which seem to him to be false. This is the reason why, when a proposition is inconceivable to us, we must suspend our judgment and not on that account deny it, but examine the contrary proposition. If we find this to be

---

thing that Port-Royal and the Jansenists retained nothing of this *rational* conception, which gives us the clue to the Pascalian method; it is true that it was quite beyond their intellectual horizon. It is greatly to the credit of Filleau de la Chaise that he should have noted all these things carefully.

[1] "God's word being infallible in the facts themselves" (Eighteenth *Provinciale*, VII, 50-51).

manifestly false, we may boldly affirm the first, incomprehensible though it may be . . . since, these two propositions being both inconceivable, it is nevertheless certain that one of them is true" (*Esprit géométrique*, IX, 259-60; 177-8). And Pascal relied on this principle to prove that the infinite divisibility of a continuous magnitude, although incomprehensible, is true, because the contrary leads to manifest absurdity, beginning with the denial of the mathematical object. It was in this way, too, that he established the reality of the vacuum, inconceivable as it appeared to be.

It is natural for the reason to propound contrary theses, but by itself, and with its own resources merely,[1] it cannot decide between them. Kant perceived this truth, but concluded that there can be no solution of the antinomies by the speculative reason; between the thesis that propounds creation, simple substances, free causality, the necessary Being, and its antithesis that denies them all, speculative reason remains in suspense. Thus we arrive at a kind of transcendental scepticism, whence we cannot emerge save by an act of faith which will *propound* the thesis. But who does not realize that such a solution is as dangerous as the uncertainty whence it removes us, since to Kant the most important thing about this act of faith was the affirmation "I believe," and not the affirmation that "God is?"[2] Pascal, on the contrary, said: there must be a solution; there *is* a solution; let us look for it. Whence does this difference arise?

Kant realized the antinomies in *our reason*, and tended to take them, as the post-Kantians would, for the antinomies of the *object* or *matter* considered, whereas the contradiction is not in the reality, but in the human mind.[3]

---

[1] That is to say, *without relying on the facts*. In this Pascal, whatever one may pretend, is certainly not fideistic, but perfectly orthodox. *Si quis dixerit, Deum unum et verum, Creatorem et Dominum nostrum, per ea quae facta sunt, naturali rationis humanæ lumine certo cognosci non posse, anathema sit.* (*Constitutiones Concilii Vaticani, sessio III, canones de Revelatione I.* Denzinger, 1653). Notice, in this canon *per ea quæ facta sunt*, and *posse*.

[2] *Critique of pure reason.* ch. II, section 3. As Ruyssen has well said: "Science is certain, but it goes no further than the phenomenon; moral faith attains the absolute, but it is bereft of objective validity."

[3] Cournot realized this clearly (*Essai sur les fondements de nos connaissances*,

Therein lies his error, arising from the fact that Kant did not actually believe in reality. In his philosophy there is no place for a true conception of experience; he makes the mind the dwelling-place of truth, and the consequence of this is that, when the mind sets up the antinomies, thesis against antithesis, the reason can find no possible issue.

Pascal took a deeper and more correct view of the matter, for he believed in truth, in reality, and therefore, that when we set up the antinomies, we must look for an issue, because *it does exist.* And that which will provide us with a solution, and will help us to find the issue in helping us to find the truth, is conformity with reality; fact gives the casting-vote.[1]

| *Incomprehensible:* | INCOMPREHENSIBLE: |
|---|---|
| 1. that God exists, | 1. that God does not exist; |
| 2. that the soul exists with the body, | 2. that we have no souls; |
| 3. that the world was created; | 3. that the world was not created; |
| 4. that original sin is a fact. | 4. that original sin is not a fact. |

SOLUTION:

All that is *incomprehensible* does not cease to BE.

Examples of this are found in an infinite number; an infinite space, equal to the finite.

As a matter of fact, these two "incomprehensibles" are not of the same order, nor have they the same value. The first

---

§145. cf. *Traité de l'enchainement des idées fondamentales*, §188). And he has shown wherein Pascal's solution, which opposes religious faith to reason, and proposes faith to us through practice, manifests "a truer and more profound understanding of the conditions and the needs of human nature" (*Essai*, §394, note), although it must be admitted that Cournot takes only a partial view of this solution, and has not discerned its eminently rational aspect.

[1] "If human beings do know something certain, it is facts" (Filleau de la Chaise, *Discours sur les preuves des livres de Moyse*, opening). The table which follows is only an exposition of *230*, and the "solution" is taken from *430*. It is well to note the way in which these antinomies are formulated; the thesis and the antithesis each express a truth, in a certain sense, one for the logical reason, the other for the reason of effects, but the first must yield to the second.

depends upon our reason, or, more correctly, our *logic;* the second depends upon *facts*. In other words, God, for instance, is *incomprehensible* to human reason, because He is infinite, because He is both transcendent *and* immanent, prompting man both infallibly *and* freely (*231*, *233*; Eighteenth *Provinciale*); but without God, facts, that is, the whole of nature and its effects, as well as our human nature and our very existence, are INCOMPREHENSIBLE. So too, says Pascal, original sin is *incomprehensible*, and there is no doubt that nothing is a greater shock to our reason or offends us more than this doctrine, but, "without this mystery, the most *incomprehensible* of all, we are INCOMPREHENSIBLE to ourselves . . . so that man is more inconceivable without this mystery than this mystery is inconceivable to man."[1] Now between our logic and the facts, between our concepts and the reality, there can be no doubt as to the choice; our logic must bow to the facts, and our concepts yield to reality. We must then affirm the truth of God, the soul, creation, original sin, *incomprehensible* as they are to man, because without them, the given reality is INCOMPREHENSIBLE.[2] And when we have thus submitted to the facts, we shall perceive that if these truths *seem* incomprehensible to us, and if each of them is made up of verities that "seem to contradict each other," and that certain thinkers "hold to be incompatible," all that we have a right to conclude is that our concepts, our language, our logic are not suited to them, and cannot suit them, since in reality these truths "all subsist in an admirable order" in which they are reconciled without being identified, for faith teaches us to put them, each one in its order, upon different planes, and into different themes.[1]

---

[1] *434*; XIII, 349; 532. In this instance Pascal goes too far. Besides the fact that he exaggerates the offensiveness of the idea of original sin, we cannot admit that, were it not for this mystery, we should be, as he says, incomprehensible to ourselves, or in other words, that original sin is the *sole* explanation possible of what we discover in ourselves. There is assuredly, as Pascal realized, something *unbalanced* in our human nature; but this lack of balance might be explained by the natural fact that bad qualities are more easily transmitted and accumulated through heredity than good ones. That it is *more easily* accounted for through original sin, *supposed to be known* (as it is through revelation), is quite certain, but if we go further we run the risk of forcing matters and exceeding the conclusions authorized by the facts. This last antinomy, therefore, is not of the same value as the three others (God, the soul, creation), which retain all their power of conviction.

[2] In his *Remarques*, 1728 (III) Voltaire protests: "What a far-fetched explanation! *Man is inconceivable, without a mystery that is inconceivable.* It is bad enough to understand nothing about our origin without explaining it by a thing we do not understand" or "by an unintelligible system. Would it not be better to say: *I know nothing about it?* A mystery was never yet an explanation." If this were so, we should have to reject, without examination, a theory like that of Einstein, and pass sentence on the whole of science, which does not account for and handle phenomena except by relating them to the realities or the principles which it establishes from their effects. On the nature of these principles it forms only hypotheses which can always be replaced, and sooner or later always are replaced, by others.

Thus the Pascalian dialectic in no way denies reason, to raise faith upon its ruins. On the contrary, it is an endeavour to show that the Christian religion is eminently in conformity with reason, and that the latter must submit to it.[2] The reason, however, of which Pascal speaks, is not the arrogant reason of the philosophers, which constitutes itself the supreme judge of all things and aspires to submit reality to its rules; it is reason reduced to its essential elements, and corrected in such a way as to adapt itself to the facts, natural as well as supernatural. For the *logical reason*, then, Pascal substitutes the *reason of effects*;[3] or rather, he subordinates logical reason to the reason of effects, by taking a course quite contrary to that followed by the Hegelian idealism,[4] a course which the Platonic dialectic had already foreshadowed.[1] In other words, Pascal says in substance that there are in reality effects for which we must give account. The thesis which provides the reason for the effects, incomprehensible as it appears to logical reason, is the true one, because it is in conformity with reality and accounts for it.

---

[1] The explanation of *862* will be found in the Appendix; the very important text of the *Entretien* (ch. VII) shows the application of this principle to human nature.

[2] Voltaire, in this respect much more clear-sighted than some of his modern disciples, grasped this perfectly, and the weight of his criticism rests upon it. See his curious letter to M. de la Condamine, June, 22, 1734, very frequently quoted: "With regard to Pascal, the whole point of the question evidently turns upon this—to know whether human reason suffices to prove that there are two natures in man. I know that Plato had the idea of it and it is very ingenious, but it is very far from philosophical . . . Speaking philosophically, the wretchedness of life no more proves the fall of man than the wretchedness of a cab-horse proves that all horses were once big and fat, and never knew the lash, and that, since the time when one of them took it into his head to eat too much hay, all his descendants were doomed to draw cabs. If the Scriptures informed me of this as a fact I should believe it, but I must at any rate own that I should need Scriptural authority for it: my reason would not suffice."

[3] *Vide* the fragments entitled *Raison des effets* (Section V in the Brunschvicg edition) and the beginning of *430*.

[4] "The logical world, as constructed by Hegelian idealism, affords, one

Concepts, which are the work of man, must yield to facts, which are of God, and thus impose themselves on man.

The last question which presented itself was this one. The fact gives the casting vote; but how are we to establish the fact? Pascal knew very well that the "mere fact" can neither prove itself nor experiment upon itself; it can only be established by authority (*Traité du vide*, II, 131, 75). For the demonstrable proofs, therefore, we must substitute moral and historical proofs. These are of a different order, but no less

---

might say, a reversed picture of the real world. Hegel was at any rate conscious of this, for in order to build up his system he gave it as a basis the identity of pure being with pure nothingness." (Ravaisson, *Revue des deux mondes*, March 15, 1887, p. 401). Hegel indeed was not content merely to affirm the inseparable nature of the contradictories; he proclaimed their identity and fundamental unity in the bosom of nature, which to him is the Absolute, the end and substance of which is the human mind, and which realizes itself through its development, so that all that is real is rational; all that is, must be; and force finds itself deified. This doctrine is an idealized pantheism, which reduces God to Mind, the origin of material things to that of concepts, and metaphysics to logic; it is an absolute relativism, which tends to absorb being and not-being, truth and falsity, good and evil, in a unity in which everything is itself, and also its contrary; it "carries to an extreme the Spinozist conception of immanence" (Delbos, *Le problème moral dans la philosophie de Spinoza*, Paris, 1893, p. 472), and in this sense it appears the exact reverse of the Pascalian doctrine.

[1] Plato, who has so many remarkable affinities with Pascal, and whom Pascal esteemed as much for his belief in immortality as for his mental power (*219*), in his final philosophy gave to the problem of participation a solution which may well be compared with Pascal's doctrine. Such indeed seems to be the significance of the *Parmenides:* although Plato does not apparently take sides for the one thesis or the other, yet it is clear that to him the INCOMPREHENSIBILITY of the second thesis, which posits the non-existence of the one, proves the truth of the first, which posits the existence of the one, however *incomprehensible* it may be, for according to the formula which gives its true conclusion to the dialogue, if the one (the permanent) is not, then nothing is. This *one* that is, however, is not the *one* school of the Eleatic, that ever-recurring source of sophisms; it is the *one being* which participates in the manifold without being identified with it, and engenders consequences which are opposed to each other, but are not contradictory, and which agree, according to definite rules, with various points of view.

certain, and "the methods by means of which we acquire such certainties, although not geometrical, are none the less infallible."[1] Now what constitutes these proofs? *The agreement and the convergence of independent pieces of evidence.* Each of the proofs, taken separately, could not be held to be infallible, but when they are marshalled together they become so strong that they allow of our arriving at a certainty, which if not more complete is at any rate closer and more natural than any afforded by speculative or abstract demonstrations. Take the case of the Fire of London. "How many people are there who have not heard this conflagration spoken of twenty times or more? At first, they would perhaps have taken an even bet that the event had really occurred; at the second recital, possibly two to one, but after thinking it over they would have been ready to lay a hundred to one with the third person who speaks of it and a thousand to one with the fourth; at the tenth repetition they would even stake their life upon it. For multiplication of this kind is something quite different from the multiplication of numbers. . . And the reason for it is quite clear, for however many times a number may be multiplied by continual additions, it is always a very long way from infinity; whereas on the other side, *from the third or even the second testimony, provided it be circumstantial, we can arrive at infinity, that is, the certainty of the occurrence.*"[2]

This is typical of all certainty. In the oral exposition of his *Apology*, Pascal "showed that it is only upon proofs of this kind that the things recognized by the world as the most certain are based" (XII, cciv). It is upon the accumulation of such proofs that our faith in the Christian religion rests; it is with such facts that the truth of this religion is inseparably connected, and we shall agree, says Pascal, "that there is no proof more convincing, and that it would be as difficult to doubt it as it would be to doubt a proposition of Euclid, even relying upon reason alone."

---

[1] Filleau de la Chaise, XII, cciv. What follows is taken from the two discourses already quoted, and the treatise that follows them (Desprez edition of the *Pensées*, Paris, 1765, pp. 350-358).

[2] Newman in his *Grammar of Assent* clearly realized that every concrete inference or certainty, in astronomy as in revelation, rests upon an accumulation of *independent* and *convergent* probabilities. These two characteristics are essential and complementary, and Pascal, the discoverer of the calculus of probabilities, recognized this fact perfectly. Extremely happy illustrations of this method of reasoning will be found in Cournot, *Essai*, ch. IV; Bergson, "Telepathy and coincidence" in *Mind-Energy*, pp. 81-86, and L. J. Henderson, "*La finalité du milieu cosmique*" (*Bulletin de la société française de philosophie*, April, 1921.

Now what is it that effects this transition from probability to certainty? It is the *heart*. The heart, in fact, effects the synthesis of all these independent probabilities, and grasps the point at which they converge. And the proofs which come from the heart have moreover this advantage, "that in persuading men of the truth they make it lovable, without which all is unavailing" (*Discours sur les preuves des livres de Moïse*, conclusion). This double claim renders the heart indispensable. But there is yet more. Without the proofs, the heart suffices, and therefore the proofs are not indispensable. And it is one more proof of the truth of religion that it is thus adapted to all kinds of minds, so that those who are humble of heart and of an inner saintliness do not fail to judge of it just as well as those whose mental powers are equal to showing them the truth and enabling them to judge of it by the proofs. "It is God Himself who inclines their hearts to belief, and thus they are most effectually persuaded"; theirs is the supreme knowledge, which is love (*284-288*).

Such, in its main lines, was Pascal's admirable method, a method in which proof and conviction, intuition and logic, the internal fact and the external fact are perfectly balanced. It is a method that satisfies the most exacting demands of the reason and yet is within the scope of the simplest soul. It is a *method of immanence*, assuredly, in the sense that it seeks the lever which will lift man out of himself, and addresses itself to his heart to make him desire, find, and realize the truth, which alone is capable of fulfilling his expectations; but it is not a *doctrine of immanence*, for, unlike the doctrines which find in man or in nature the source and the consummation of faith, that is, the truth itself, it establishes between the intellectual order, the highest in nature, and the order of charity, which is supernatural, an infinitely infinite distance, and a discontinuity such that one cannot naturally rise from the one to the other.[1] To Pascal the proofs of the truth of religion are facts that are beyond us and transcend nature; but it is precisely the act proper to reason, "the last step taken by reason, to recognize that there are an infinite number of things that transcend it" (*267*), so that for man to submit himself to what is beyond him is to conquer himself.

---

[1] The method of immanence thus arrives at a doctrine of transcendence. The very important movement of thought to which Cardinal Newman, Cardinal Deschamps, and (nearer our own day) Ollé-Laprune, Laberthonnière, and Maurice Blondel, are attached, proceeds largely from Pascal.

# VII

## THE PENSÉES
## MAN'S WRETCHEDNESS APART FROM GOD
## THE TWO INFINITES
## HUMAN JUSTICE

"We must know ourselves," wrote Pascal, "and if that does not serve to discover truth, at any rate it serves to regulate our lives, and nothing is more fitting" (*66*).

Pascal, then, was ready to teach men to examine themselves; he would "remind them that they have a heart and make them begin by knowing their own depths thoroughly." This knowledge of themselves is essential to all men—the freethinker, even the atheist, ought to know where he stands, if he would regulate his life instead of leaving it to chance; therefore he must listen to Pascal. Pascal was thus certain of compelling the attention of them all; he would creep his way into their hearts to touch them, for it was not in him but in themselves that they would find the truth of what he said, and thus his arguments would have more persuasive power. This was the reason why, "in his opinion, no other way, however good in itself, was at all suitable for human beings, whereas this way seemed to him to be consistent with the state of their hearts and minds."[1] This self-introspection, the habit of which is so effective in the practice of religion, is equally well adapted to the discovery and the proving of truth, and it is from this point that Pascal started to rise, or rather, to raise man, to the knowledge of truth. It was to the study of human nature that he first of all applied his method, and on this foundation he established his apology for the Christian religion.

[1] Filleau de la Chaise, *Discours sur les Pensées* (XII, cciii). cf. *18*, *64*, *10*.

Let us briefly recall what this method is, and show how Pascal applied it to the subject he was considering.

The reason can neither arrive at nor comprehend the truth directly. It establishes and realizes it by proving that the contrary thesis is erroneous, and thus the truth is founded upon a double negation. Now how do we establish the error of the opposite standpoint? By examination of the facts. In other words, there are facts which, by establishing the error of the antitheses, permit of our coming to a *rational* conclusion of the existence of God, of creation, the soul, sin, even though these are matters which are inconceivable or incomprehensible to our reason, but it is the very property of reason to yield to facts, and to subordinate logical reason to the reason of effects, that is, human conceptions to eternal truth. This is why such conclusions as are founded upon the facts are *supremely rational*, even when they exceed our powers of comprehension.

We have drawn a contrast between this position and that taken by Kant and the German idealism, and essayed to show wherein and why Pascal is superior to Kant. It is, in a word, through his *humility*, for it is only in humbleness of heart that we reach the truth. While the reason which is not rational "feels certain of having within itself all the strength required for conquest" and with this certainty, despite "prolonged and intense toil," can yet never succeed in acquiring anything that is certain (*73*) —while Kant, who proudly locked up the truth within us, could not decide between thesis and antithesis when reason presented them with equal force—Pascal, who believed in reality, who humbly submitted to the reality transcending him, seeing in it the true object of reason, found the path to follow and the way out, by conforming to the reality created by God. If reason be forbidden to leave its own realm, as Kant, who denies it any intellectual intuition, forbids it—if truth be represented as the work of man's own mind—we shall inevitably arrive either at *scepticism* or at *fideism;* this is the case with Kant. Pascal escapes this double snare and shows us the right method when he teaches us that reason proves the existence of God if only we will rely upon facts. To attain the truth, therefore, reason must go outside and beyond herself, but in doing this she does not renounce her powers—far from it, for submission to facts is the true use of reason, and nothing is so conformable to reason as this disclaiming of reason (*269*, *272*). And here again we see why it is eminently rational to affirm the existence of God, wholly inconceivable as it is, just as it is eminently rational to affirm mathematical infinity or the existence of the vacuum, also wholly inconceivable.

The antinomies and contradictions among which human reason moves are thus not incapable of solution. That thesis which accords with the facts and provides us with a reason for them, however incomprehensible it may be, is the true one. From the rational point of view it is as certain as the greatest certainties we know, since it rests upon proofs that, if not geometrical, are none the less infallible.

Now let us apply this theory to human nature.[1] Man's nature is both great and pitiable. The dogmatists, like Epictetus, deny its weakness; the sceptics, like Montaigne deny its greatness. Their premisses are true, but their conclusions are false, because the opposite premisses are also true (*394*). The Christian religion alone has realized the whole nature of man; it alone has known his greatness *and* his wretchedness, and the reason for both, however incomprehensible this may be (*433*). It is then in the truth, because it maintains the facts and accounts for them. Besides (and we should note this point carefully, for it is of capital importance), there is the way in which it reconciles the contraries. In doctrines that are purely human these contraries are incompatible and each negatives the other, thereby destroying truth. "And the reason of this is that these worldly sages place the contraries in the same category, for one of them attributed man's greatness to nature and the other derived his wretchedness from this same nature, a position which cannot be maintained;[1] while faith teaches us to place them in different categories, all that pertains to man's weakness belonging to human nature, and all that there is in him of strength belonging to grace." Now nature and grace are not identical; we cannot pass from the first to the second by insensible gradations. Between nature and grace there is discontinuity; they are of two orders, separated by a distance which is infinitely infinite; there is nothing to teach us how to unite them, and their union can only be realized by God, by an art that is wholly divine, by a wisdom that is indeed celestial, uniting all that is true and dispersing all that is false. "Here we have that wondrous, unexampled union which God alone could impart, and He alone could effect, for it is but an image and reflection of the ineffable union of two natures in the single Person of the God-Man" (*Entretien*, IV, 54; 160).

---

[1] This is the real object of the *Entretien.*

The text of the *Entretien* gives us, in a measure, the clue to the *Pensées*; but it is necessary to define its significance and determine its exact bearing on the question. *In the design conceived by Pascal, this miniature portrait of man was intended to form, not the Apology of the Christian religion, but the introduction to that Apology.*[2] It was as it were an application of Pascal's method to the *fact* that concerns us most nearly—our human nature. It was intended to give a lifelike representation of it in its twofold aspect, its contradictions and its mystery, and thus to stir us out of our strange sloth and culpable indifference, to move us and lead us to look for enlightenment which might account for it and explain us to ourselves, and at the same time provide us with a remedy for all our ills; in short, it would have helped to dispose our minds to receive "other proofs of God,"[1] for the fact that the Christian religion alone explains human nature is only one of the proofs of its truth.[2] The most salient feature of the *Apology*, which would have been its central idea, consists in the exposition of the other proofs, both moral and historical, of the Christian faith—proofs drawn from the Jewish nation, the prophecies and the miracles, the gospel story, its endurance throughout the ages, its doctrine.[3] But upon all these points Pascal has left us only notes, the majority of which are mere fragments. The only part of the *Apology* that he had time to develop with any degree of completeness is the introduction, and for this reason we must pay particular attention to it.

---

[1] Hegel goes even further, for he *identifies* the contraries in one category. Like him, Pascal observes that every truth is compounded of two contraries, and he retains them, but *places them in different degrees or orders*. What truth there is, therefore, in Hegel, had been seen and stated by Pascal; the rest depends on that "absolute idealism," or on that pantheistic doctrine of immanence which Pascal would repudiate vehemently as a monstrous combination whence "only strife and universal destruction" can result (*Entretien*, IV, 53; 160).

[2] Upon this point we have the explicit testimony of Filleau de la Chaise (XII, cciv), of Étienne Périer (XII, clxxxiii; 305), and of Nicole (XII, ccxxxix). Many commentators, however, following Voltaire (*Lettres à la Condamine*, 22 June, 1734, *au Père Tournemine, Jésuite*, 1735), and Ste-Beuve (*op. cit.* III, p. 402) have erroneously believed that the fundamental idea of the *Apology* was a consideration of man's "twofold nature," though it would be more correct to say, with Filleau de la Chaise (XII, ccv), "twofold and single at the same time."

We shall divide our exposition into two parts, in conformity with the indication given by Pascal—"*First Part:* Man's wretchedness apart from God. *Second Part:* Man's felicity with God. Or else *First Part:* That human nature is corrupt, through that nature itself. *Second Part:* That there is a Redeemer. Through Scripture" (*60*). We shall study in turn the wretchedness and the greatness of man, to show that the Christian religion alone has realized both and given the reasons for them. In this exposition, moreover, we shall not be so much concerned to discover the plan of the *Apology* as to grasp the general design of the work and the inner order of Pascal's thought.

Pascal has often been regarded as a sceptic or a pessimist, and possibly this is for want of knowing him thoroughly,[1] for his scepticism is of a merely provisional kind, and his pessimism entirely relative. In contrast with the determined sceptic, or at any rate a sceptic like Montaigne who delights in doubt, Pascal "doubts only where he must" that he "may be certain where he must be certain, yielding where yielding is necessary" (*268*). If he owes much to Montaigne and constantly borrows from the *Essais*, and especially from the *Apologie de Raymond de Sebonde*,[2] he gives a new aspect to all that he takes thence, and makes this material serve other ends. Moreover, while a Lucretius, seeking peace of mind in annihilation, attains only gloomy despair, madness, or suicide, Pascal sees in our weaknesses and shortcomings and the ordeals we have to undergo the very symbol of our greatness and the principle that raises and restores us—in a word, joy. It is important that we should never lose sight of this when Pascal is describing man's wretchedness *without God*, for these two words indicate at once the source of our ill and the remedy.

---

[1] ". . . it is not to be denied that those who had been thus influenced would be more likely to be touched by the other proofs of God" (Filleau de la Chaise, XII, ccv).

[2] This undoubtedly struck the Jansenists most forcibly, but it may be doubted whether it was the decisive proof to Pascal; in any case, it was not the only one.

[3] Filleau de la Chaise (XII, ccvii, ccxvii, ccxxxiii) and the two extremely important *Pensées 289* (*Preuve*) and *290* (*Preuves de la religion*).

What is to be our first step? "We must know ourselves," says Pascal; "and if that knowledge does not serve to discover truth, at any rate it serves to regulate our lives, and nothing is more fitting" (*66*). To define man, let us go to the natural sciences and see whither they lead us. "If these be not true, there is no truth in man; and if they are true he will find in them much to humiliate him,"[3] for they at once make manifest the disproportion existing between nature and himself, lost as he is between the infinitely great and the infinitely little.

> "Let man contemplate the whole realm of nature in its full and exalted majesty, turning his eyes away from the base objects that surround him on all sides. Let him lift

---

[1] V. Giraud, *op. cit.*, pp. 183, 201, and above, p. 13.

[2] Abundant testimony from Pascal to his favourite author is afforded by the *Entretien* and *18*, *62-65*, *234*, *325*, *813-814*.

[3] These words are found in the paragraph which begins the fragment on the Two Infinites, or the *Disproportion de l'homme* (*72*, fol. 347), afterwards erased by Pascal.

his glance to this dazzling light, placed like a lamp to illumine the universe to all eternity; let the earth appear to him but as a point in the vast circle described by this luminary, and let him pause to wonder at the fact that this vast circle itself is but a tiny point compared to that described by the stars revolving in the firmament. But if man's view be arrested there, let his imagination pass beyond this point, and it will exhaust its powers of conception, before nature has exhausted its supply of concepts. This whole visible world is but a speck on the broad bosom of nature. No image can do it justice, and however we may enlarge our conceptions beyond all imaginable space we create but atoms in comparison with the actual realities. It is a sphere, whose centre is everywhere, and its circumference nowhere. It is, in short, the greatest characteristic, available to sense, of the almighty power of God, that our imagination should lose itself in this thought.

"Then, returning to himself, let man consider what he is in comparison with all this expanse of being; let him regard himself as lost in this remote province of nature, and from the little cell wherein he has his abode, the universe, let him learn to estimate aright the earth, its kingdoms, its cities, and himself. What is man in the infinite?

"But to show him another marvel, no less astonishing, let him examine the minutest things he knows. Let him consider a mite, and note the tiny body composed of parts incomparably more minute; the limbs with joints, the veins in the limbs, blood in the veins, humours in the blood, drops in the humours, and vapours in the drops. Let him again divide these parts, exhausting his powers of imagination, and he may think he has arrived at the most extreme diminutive in nature. Then I will open before him a new abyss. I will depict for him not only the visible universe, but all the immensity of nature imaginable in the enclosing envelope of this minute atom. Let him see therein an infinity of universes, each with its firmament, planets, and earth in the same proportion as in the visible world. In each earth animals, down to the midget existences that show him all that he has already seen in the first. However many he may see he will find in all the same unending, unresting purpose, and he will lose himself in all these marvels, as wonderful in their minuteness as the others in their immensity, for who will not be amazed to realize that our human body, just now perceived to be but an imperceptible atom in an insignificant planet of the universe, now becomes a colossus, a world, a vast whole with regard to the nothingness into which we cannot penetrate?

"Whoever sees himself in this way will be terrified of himself, and, considering how he is upheld in the material substance nature has given him between the two abysses of the infinite and nothing, he will tremble at the sight of such marvels; and I think that as his curiosity changes into wonder he will be more disposed to contemplate them in silence than to presume to investigate them.

"For after all, what is man in nature? A nothing compared with the infinite; a whole with regard to nothing, a mean between nothing and everything. Infinitely far removed as he is from understanding either extreme, to him the end of all things and their beginnings are hidden in a baffling, impenetrable mystery; he can see neither the nothingness whence he was taken, nor the infinity in which he is engulfed. . ."

This well-known fragment, one of the most complete of the *Pensées*, is also one of those which make manifest Pascal's genius and its profound intuition. If we would thoroughly understand all its significance we must remember that if at this time the telescope was already known and if, thanks to its aid, Galileo had since 1610 been able to begin the exploration of the heavens, the microscope, although invented in 1590, had not yet received the perfecting touches which would permit of its being used for precise and detailed observation.[1] If then the infinity of greatness began to be conceived, the infinity of minuteness could not yet be imagined. Now Pascal, simply by his insight and his genius, forestalled the inventions and discoveries of our age, and went beyond the conclusions we can draw from them, indicating to the mind of man the path it should pursue, the end that beckons to it, and the limits within which it moves without ever being able to overleap them. By virtue of this, his conception of *two infinites* is possibly the greatest effort of which the human intellect is capable.

We have had to wait until the last half-century[2] to be able, thanks to the enormously increased power of the apparatus at our command, and the discovery of extremely ingenious and exact methods of measuring (such as spectrum analysis) to verify, through the convergence of the results thus obtained, what Pascal had already perceived. It is by these means that we can penetrate the limitless immensity of the universe and of the atom, reckon, weigh, and measure, either in light-years or in millionths of a millimetre, the stellar systems on the confines of the visible world, or the ultra-microscopic particles which we can only guess at from their action on the visible corpuscles. With each fresh degree of enlargement a new world appears within our purview. Beyond our solar system and our Milky Way, behind dark abysses which light takes millions of years to traverse, we can perceive faint tufts of light, other Milky Ways at an infinite distance, like that cloudlet of Magellan from which three hundred thousand light-years separate us. Each of these tufts is a star-cluster. Yet the very tiniest air-bubble contains more molecules than there are stars in the Milky Way, and each of the atoms that constitute these molecules—and in a single milligram of hydrogen there are more than thirty billions of them—each of these infinitesimal particles, once believed to be indivisible, forms, like the tiniest element of Pascal's mite, a microcosm, a world in miniature, similar to our solar system, with a positive nucleus around which planets charged with negative electricity gravitate. If you look into this nucleus and increase your scale you will find a new world, the density of which is everywhere infinitely small, except for an infinitely large number of isolated points in which it assumes an infinitely great value,[1] and thus our infinitely small particles are still infinitely distant from the elementary ones. Hence that which seemed to be simple, the cellule, the atom, is resolved into infinite complexity; that which is continuous, like the contour of an air-bubble, is resolved into discontinuity; the apparent immobility of particles in suspension in a fluid at rest, conceals an incessant mobility, and what we designate equilibrium is but the redistribution of irregular phenomena around a mean position, according to the laws of probability. But—and this is still stranger—the infinitely small and the infinitely great, the further we probe into them, by no means display a growing divergence, as would be the case with finite greatness and littleness; on the contrary, they seem to resemble each other and combine. Is it not surprising that the infinitely small, that is, the light-wave, alone has permitted us to penetrate within the infinitely great, that is, the stellar universe, and to make its visible limits recede before us?

---

[1] As a matter of fact until the successful production of the first achromatic object-lenses in 1824, microscopic observations were still quite limited and rudimentary.

[2] For what follows, the works of the English physicists J. J. Thomson, Rutherford, and Bragg, upon the structure of the atom, should be consulted.

Now Pascal saw all this, and he saw beyond it. Thought, he stated, equally incapable of "arriving at the centre of things" and of "encompassing their circumference," loses itself between these two infinites both of which infinitely exceed its powers, for "it requires no less ability to proceed to nothingness than to advance to the whole" (XII, 82; 352). We erroneously believe, however, that it is easier to penetrate the infinitely small, because we ourselves surpass it, and for this reason few have aspired to encompass all things, while many have aspired to arrive at the source, the very centre, of things. Whence does this error arise? No doubt it is due to the fact that we interpret the two infinites in terms of space or of quantity, which are more in proportion with the scope of our intellect, and thus we believe that a subdivision of the small things will lead us to their primal, indivisible elements much more quickly than an enlarged vision could bear us to the uttermost confines of the visible world. Nevertheless, in both cases it is a veritable infinity that discloses itself before us. Yet more, these two infinities involve each other,[1] so that "he who could comprehend the final principles of existence could also attain to the knowledge of the infinite." This is because the kind of infinity that Nature in her double capacity reveals to us is not a quantitative infinity. In order to represent it, let us imagine "a point moving everywhere with infinite speed, for it is in all places and yet whole and entire in every place" (*231*). "Infinite movement, a point pervading space, the momentum of [an infinite mass at] rest"[2]—have we not here a symbol of "an infinite without quantity, indivisible and infinite" (*232*)? In this, and in this alone, it is very true to say that the infinitely great and the infinitely small, the end and the beginning, meet and unite. "The one depends on the other, and the one leads to the other. These extremes meet and unite by virtue of being separated; they find each other in God and in God alone."

---

[1] cf. Perrin, *op. cit.*, p. xiv, and P. Vaillant's MS. note on the subject. Let us suppose, in fact, that the total volume has been divided into a very great number $n$ of equal parts of volume $v$. The quotient $\frac{n}{v}$, i.e., the mean density, is the same for each of these parts, as long as $n$ is not too great, i.e., as long as $v$ is not too small. Beyond a certain limit, on both sides there intervene fluctuations the size of which increases as $v$ diminishes. Finally, when $n$ increases indefinitely, the mean density, which then represents the true density, generally tends to equal zero, except in certain positions, infinitely great in number (although infinitely small with relation to $n$), where it becomes infinite (i.e., infinitely great with relation to the density of the vacuum). It is interesting to compare this conception with Pascal's views of the animated point of infinite speed, which fills everything (231-2), and of the infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere (72) as well as his complementary intuition of the discontinuity of the different orders of infinity (III, 366).

---

[1] They are perhaps identical, *on the same scale.* Compare what Pascal says on this point in the *Esprit géométrique* (IX, 262; 179): "If they consider it strange that a small space should have as many parts as a large one, let them remember that they too are proportionately smaller, and let them look at the firmament through a little glass, to familiarize themselves with this, by seeing each part of the heavens in each part of the glass. But if they cannot understand that such small parts as are imperceptible to us may be as much divided as the firmament, there is nothing better than to let them look through spectacles that magnify these tiny points into large masses . . ."

[2] *Momentum*, in Galileo's language, means the weight of a body with respect to its particular state. Momentum, like weight, according to Galileo, is measured by speed. From this passage we see that, to Pascal, a point endowed with infinite speed is like an infinite mass at rest.

"Let us then know our limits," continues Pascal; "we are something, but we are not all. Such amount of existence as is ours conceals from us the knowledge of first principles, which spring from nothingness, while the small extent of that existence hides from us the sight of the infinite. In the order of intelligible things our intelligence holds the same position as our body in the vast expanse of Nature." Restricted in every way, we can only hold the mean between two extremes that escape us entirely. We feel neither extreme heat nor extreme cold; too much light dazzles us, too much pleasure troubles us, too many concords are unpleasing in music; both too little and too much instruction wearies the mind; both too much wine and too little intoxicant inhibits truth, and so on. We are equally incapable of certain knowledge and of absolute ignorance (XII, 83-5; 353-4. cf. *69*, *71*).

Man cannot know the whole of anything, for how can a part know the whole? May he then, perhaps, know at least the parts to which he is proportioned? No; for "all existing things are cause and effect, dependent and sustaining, mediate and immediate, and all held together by a natural but imperceptible bond, which unites the most distant and the most dissimilar things,[1] so that I regard it as impossible to know the parts without knowing the whole, and equally impossible to know the whole without knowing the parts in detail" (XII, 88; 355-6).

Finally, our twofold nature itself forbids us the knowledge of things that are simple, either spiritual or corporeal, and as for their union in our being, it is still more incomprehensible to us, for "man is to himself the most marvellous object in Nature" (XII, 91; 357).

---

[1] Of this "connection between all things" Pascal has given a striking example in which he applies it to the world of ethics: "The least movement is of importance to the whole of Nature; the whole ocean is changed by a pebble" (*505*).

Let us conclude. "It is vain for reason to plead; it cannot truly estimate things" (*82*; XIII, 2; 363). The reason is always deceived by changes in appearance, and nothing can fix it between the two infinites which both enclose it and fly from it. It is a faculty of means, always related to beginnings and ends that it does not settle, and that are beyond its scope (XII, 86, 78; 354, 350). "Justice and truth are two such subtle points that our instruments are too blunt to touch them accurately. If they reach the point, they flatten it by their pressure all round it, which falls more often on the wrong spot than on the right" (*82*; XIII, 13; 369).

Besides this natural incapacity which prevents the reason from seeing the truth, everything deceives it, everything leads it astray, and it is constantly tricked by "deceptive powers" (*83*). Pascal gives us a remarkable description of this trickery, which we will follow step by step.

1. *The Senses.*—The most potent of these causes of error—and we must begin with this—is the conflict between the senses and the reason (*82*). Certainly "the impressions of the senses are always true" (*9*); nevertheless, "the senses trick the reason by false appearances" (*83*). Why is this? Because, being naturally unable to see everything, we yet judge of what we do not see by what we do see, whereas all things have various aspects, usually heterogeneous, and to judge aright we ought to see all sides. Thus the senses, on account of their natural imperfection, trick the reason, and it avenges itself, agitating the senses by prejudices due to the passions of the soul (*412*).

2. *The Imagination.*—After the senses, there is the imagination. "This is that deceitful part of man, the mistress of error and falsity, all the more perfidious because she is not always so, for she would be an infallible rule of truth, if she were an infallible rule of lying." This proud power, which is the

enemy of reason, and loves to dominate it, has established a second nature in man, and she satisfies her hosts far more than reason. She governs all men. Consider some reverend magistrate at a sermon. "The preacher is about to appear; but if nature has bestowed on him a harsh voice or a grotesque expression, if his barber has shaved him badly, or if his clothes happen to be splashed, then however lofty the truths he enunciates, I will wager that our senator loses his gravity. If the greatest philosopher in the world be set on a plank really wider than he needs, but with a precipice beneath it, though his reason may assure him of his safety, his imagination will triumph. . . Who does not know that the sight of cats, and rats, the breaking of a lump of coal, etc., may temporarily unhinge the reason?" (*82*). "The mind of this supreme judge of the world is not so independent that it can escape being upset by the slightest commotion in its neighbourhood. It does not require the report of a gun to break his train of thought; the creaking of a weathercock or a pulley is quite sufficient. Do not be surprised if he is unable to argue well just at the moment, for a fly is buzzing in his ears, and that is quite enough to render him incapable of sound judgment. If you want him to find the truth, get rid of this creature that holds his reason in check, and disturbs the powerful intellect that governs cities and kingdoms. Here is a droll kind of god! *O ridicolosissimo eroe!*" (*366*).

Droll is the reason, too, that is swayed by a breath, and turns in all directions. "How much more confidence in the right of the cause he is pleading is seen in a lawyer who has been well paid in advance! How much weight his assured demeanour carries with the judges who are thus duped by appearances!" This is what sways almost all our actions, "for reason has been forced to yield, and the wisest reason accepts as its own the principles which the imagination of men has boldly introduced in all quarters." Our magistrates are well aware of this mysterious power. The vain trappings of their office, their scarlet robes, their ermine, strike the imagination and ensure them respect. It is impossible to see a lawyer in his gown, his wig on his head, without having a good opinion of his competence. Were they really endowed with true justice there would be no need for wig and gown! Some of them appear imposing by their garb or their hypocrisy, others establish their influence by power; our kings seek no disguises, but the "armed stalwarts" by whom they are surrounded make the firmest tremble.

Thus "the imagination disposes of all things; it creates beauty, justice and happiness, and these are the world's all" (*82*; XIII, 10; 367). It offers as a substitute for truth either old impressions or the charms of novelty; hence arise all human dissensions. It "enlarges little things so that they fill our soul through the fantastic estimate it creates, and it insolently belittles the great to its own measure, as when it speaks of God" (*84*). It enlarges the present, and contracts eternity (*195*). But since this present hurts and afflicts us, the imagination tries to make it bearable by anticipating the future, which it makes its aim, and which for ever eludes it. "Thus we never really live, but are always in hope of living, and while we are always preparing ourselves for happiness, it is inevitable that we never are actually happy" (*172*). The imagination, then, deceives us perpetually; it makes us regard as real the fictions created by our fantasy, and we revere them as if they actually existed, like "children who are frightened by the face they have daubed" (*88*).

3. *Custom.*—Among so many contrary appearances, how are we to discern natural principles, and how shall we prove them? Are there indeed any natural principles? "What are our natural principles if they be not our accustomed principles?" (*92*). "Custom is our nature" (*89*). "When we find that a certain effect always follows the same course, we conclude from it that there is a natural necessity, as for instance, that there will be daylight to-morrow, etc." (*91*). But "a different custom will give us other natural principles; this is clear from experience" (*92*). "What then is this nature that is liable to be effaced? Custom is a second nature, which destroys the former one. But what is nature, for is not custom natural? I am greatly afraid that nature

itself is only our first custom, as custom is second nature" (*93*). Examples of this are the hunting instinct in wild animals; most of our "natural instincts"; and even our geometrical postulates, down to those primitive ideas of number, space, time, dimensions and movement which our reasoning has made natural to us, and which we regard as essential, because we cannot believe anything different (*89*, *95*, *233*). To come to the practical side of things, custom influences our choice of a profession, which is the most important step in our whole life. Chance, or rather, custom arranges it. In one district all men are builders, in another all soldiers, whilst by nature they are only men; thus what is customary gains the ascendancy over nature, and to some extent fashions it, although at times nature gets the upper hand, and obliges man to act according to instinct, despite all custom (*97*).

The force of custom arises out of the fact that its principle is a profound one. This principle is *imitation*, for "Nature imitates herself. A seed sown in good ground brings forth fruit; a principle sown in a good mind brings forth fruit; numbers which are of an entirely different nature, imitate space, all is made and guided by one and the same master-hand, root, branches, fruit; principles and consequences" (*119*). "Nature always begins the same things again, years, days, and hours; spaces in like manner, and numbers, follow close on each other's heels, and thus a sort of infinity and eternity is formed" (*121*). If then nature and custom may so easily be substituted for one another, it is no doubt because they both proceed from the same principle, that which governs the universe. Nature, however, *diversifies* in her imitation, whilst custom *imitates* and then diversifies, like everything else that is artificial.[1]

Let us pause a moment here, that we may note the amazingly bold yet profound criticism contained in these few sentences, uttered at random, this almost paradoxical reversal of Aristotle's formula.[1] In them we find the germ (*91* and *92*) of the whole of the empiric doctrine, i.e. the complete "explanation" of our pretended "principles" by habitual associations, and also the whole of "evolutionism" (*93*), i.e. the "explanation" of our individual "nature" by ancestral habit, or heredity. But between Pascal on the one hand and the theories of empiricism and evolution on the other, there is a fundamental difference. Pascal—and in this he is much more cautious and, no doubt, more correct—admits the *fact*, but does not make of it an *explanatory principle*, i.e., an essential and sufficient condition. From another aspect, too, Pascal goes further than these attempts at explanation, which are confined to the surface of reality; in advance of contemporary thinkers he seems to have discerned that nature's laws are its habit, and like habit, show a certain degree of contingency, for, he says, "nature often gives us the lie, and does not submit to her own rules" (*91*). Who knows, moreover, whether these laws may not be, in a deeper sense still, *our habits*—some kind of hindrance to the freedom of the spirit, resulting from our original fall? "The soul of man is enclosed within the body, in which it finds number, time, dimension; it reasons thereon, and calls it nature or necessity, and cannot believe aught else" (*233*).

---

[1] *120. Nature diversifies* *artifice imitates*
*and imitates* *and diversifies.*
This thought, which is followed by several others on "chance" (*370*) has been erased in the manuscript. I apply to custom what Pascal has said about artifice, noting moreover that at first he had written "chance" instead of "artifice." Now between custom and chance, which are no doubt of common origin, there is a close connection, as *97* shows.

4. *Self-Love.*—Thus "man is a being full of imperfections which are natural to him, and cannot be effaced without grace" (*83*). The greatest source of all these imperfections is self-love, the human *ego*, whose nature is "to love self only and consider self alone" (*100*). In his *Maximes* La Rochefoucauld analysed very subtly and at great length all its insincerities. Pascal, like Bossuet,[2] at once seizes upon its secret vice, the hatred of truth which, by attaching us to our own *ego*, diverts us from our sole end.

---

[1] *De memoria*, ii, 452 a 28. cf. *Probl.* 879 b 36, 949 a 24-28: τὸ ἔθος φύσις γίνεται, *Rhet.* i, 11, 1370 a 7.

[2] *Third Sermon for Passion Sunday;* On men's hatred of the truth.

Herein is the guiding principle of all *injustice* and *disorder.* "The *ego* is hateful. . . It is unjust in itself, because it makes itself the centre of all things; it is disagreeable to others, since it would bring them all into subjection" (*455*). "The inclination to self-interest is the origin of every disorder in war, politics, government, and even in man's own body" (*477*). And as this human ego, loving but itself and referring everything to itself, "cannot prevent the object it loves from being full of faults and wretchedness . . . it conceives a mortal hatred of that truth which reproves it and convicts it of its faults." Now "it is no doubt an evil to be full of faults, but a still greater one to be full of them and yet unwilling to recognize them, because that would add the further fault of a voluntary self-deception" (*100*; XIII, 27; 376). Hence "our own interest is a marvellous implement for blinding our eyes pleasurably" (*82*).

No doubt, "there are different degrees in this dislike of truth, but we may say that all men possess it to some extent, for it is inseparable from self-love" (XIII, 29; 378). From this it follows that it is easy to manage men, by treating them as they would like to be treated, giving them whatever flatters them, and concealing whatever wounds them, that is, giving them error and concealing from them the truth. "Man is then only disguise, falsehood and hypocrisy, both in himself and with regard to others," and the worst of it is that "all these tendencies, so far removed from justice and reason, have their natural root in his heart" (XIII, 31; 379). They form the basis of social life. "I state it as a fact that if all men knew what others say of them behind their backs, there would not be four friends left in the world" (*101*). "Society is founded on nothing but this mutual deceit" (XIII, 31; 379). It is, too, the secret spring of all our actions, and man is attached to the truth he defends only because he is defending it. "The thirst for knowledge is but vanity. For the most part we desire to know only that we may talk of what we know" (*152*). People would neither read nor write, they would not travel, if it were not that they desire to be admired by half a dozen people, if they cannot be admired by everybody. "We can even lose our life joyfully, if only men will but talk of it" (*148-153*). What is the root of all this? It is *pride*, which possesses us so naturally. And thus it is that the life of man, throughout its frail and futile duration, is only a perpetual illusion; we do nothing but deceive and flatter ourselves and each other.

5. *Contradictions.* Hence arises man's state of contradiction in all things; by nature both credulous and sceptical, fearful and rash, dependent and anxious to be independent, each of us seems to play a double part.[1] Man seeks himself in all things, and naturally he never finds himself: hence his anxiety, his instability, his ennui, his unrest (*125-130*). Nothing is so intolerable to man as complete repose, because he is then conscious of his nothingness (*131*). His heart, a void and infinite abyss, for ever yearns to be filled, and in the absence of the true good, which he has forfeited, and which alone can satisfy him, a mere nothing contents or diverts him. Through a remarkable reversal of order he becomes sensible of small matters and indifferent to great ones (*198*). Since he is no longer master of himself, a very little thing consoles him, because a very little thing torments him (*136*). How comes it that this man, distressed at the death of his wife or of his only son, is not at this moment sad, but is apparently not even thinking about his loss? We need not be astonished, for a ball has just been served to him, and he must return it to his opponent (*140*); or you may find him altogether taken up with the hope of meeting the boar that his hounds have been hotly pursuing for the last six hours (*139*; XIII, 64; 395). He is dominated by pleasure, for if a sneeze be sufficient to absorb all his energies, what may not be accomplished by a pleasurable act? (*160*). Herein we see man's frivolity at its highest point. We have but to consider the causes and the effects of love. Its cause is a

---

[1] "We are for ever seeking to adorn and maintain our imaginary self, and we neglect the true one" (*147*). Thus in every one of us there is both what we really are, and what we try to appear.

*je ne sais quoi*, as Corneille says, and its effects are terrible. "This *je ne sais quoi*, this unknown quantity, so small a matter that we cannot recognize it, moves a whole country, sovereigns, armies, the whole world. Had Cleopatra's nose been shorter, the face of the whole world would have been changed" (*162*).

In this disproportion between cause and effect, the real and the imaginary, lies the *vanity* of our existence (*163*), and that kind of perpetual *disillusion* which we find at the root of all things, which makes us incapable of ever being satisfied with what we have. It, too, accounts for the incessant and purposeless movement by which we are agitated, which is not an ordered movement of the being towards its destined end, but the consequence and result of an irresistible internal conflict.[1]

6. *Vanity of the sciences.* Will not man at any rate find refuge in science and philosophy? No; and yet, if there be any domain to which the true interest of the reason should apply itself, it is indeed this one, that is, the search for its sovereign good. Now it is here that are most clearly evident the discrepancies and contradictions of the human mind. Where is the sovereign good to be found? On this subject all are at variance; some say that it consists in virtue, others in pleasure; others again in science, or in ignorance, or in indolence. For the philosophers there are two hundred and eighty sovereign goods! This fine thing, philosophy, does not know the soul any better for all that; what can it tell us of its nature, its origin, or its duration? Let us come down to matter; does it know that any better? Does it even know what composes man's own body, and the bodies that the philosophers deal with as they please? There is nothing in philosophy to give it a grip on truth (*73-74*).

It is, therefore, useless to try and probe philosophy or the sciences, as Descartes has done (*76*). "We must say in general

---

[1] *Vide* Boutroux, *op. cit.* p. 168. Pascal employs the term *vanity* in its strong Scriptural sense, as something *empty*, denuded of truth or practical efficacy and hence of no avail for our end. cf. *Romans* VIII, 20.

'This is made by figure and motion,' for it is true. But to say what these parts are, and to put the machine together, is ridiculous, for it is useless, uncertain, and laborious. And even if it were true, we do not think that the whole of philosophy[1] is worth an hour's trouble" (*79*). It is *uncertain*, for all this philosophy is based, not upon facts, but upon some theories of its own invention, and consequently suspect.[2] It is *useless*, because it does not guide us to the one thing needful (*670*). This science is absorbed in contemplation of the universe, but the universe remains mute. "The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me."[3] Descartes, no doubt, was unable to do without God; "he could not help making Him give the world a fillip to set it in motion, but after that he had no more need of God" (*77*).

If the reason were reasonable it would realize its feebleness and futility, it would see the reason of this and try to remedy it, for at any rate it has within it something by which it can recognize truth.[4] But for that it must submit itself, and this is what it refuses to do. And thus there is no real law, for when truth does not regulate its use reason is "swayed in all directions" (*274*).

7. *Diversion.*—Without God, then, man cannot find truth and happiness, either in himself or outside himself. He does not know where to start. *He does not seek things, but the search for things* (*135*) and while the flight of time bears him away, changes him, makes him at war with himself, he passes incessantly from one object to another, without his reason being able to establish itself in the truth, or his will in what is good. "Thus we never live, but are always hoping to live, and, for ever preparing ourselves for happiness, it is inevitable that we never are actually happy" (*172*).

[1] This refers to natural philosophy or, as Pascal calls it in another passage, "the science of external things" (*67*). This meaning of the word "philosophy" was current in the seventeenth century, and it has survived in England.

[2] cf. Filleau de la Chaise on metaphysical reasoning, XII, ccxvi.

[3] *206*. cf. *693*. It is the *indefinite* nature of the physical world, rather than the *infinite*, properly so called, that is in question here. As Ravaisson says: "The indefinite terrifies us, the infinite reassures us."

[4] This is clearly shown in the *Préface d'un traité du vide*, and in *282*, *393*.

Now all this is comprised in one word—diversion. "All the misfortunes of men arise from one thing only, that they are unable to stay quietly in one room" (*139*). This is the *cause* of all our misfortunes, and if we would discover the *reason* for them, we shall soon find that there is a very effective one, and that is the need of tearing ourselves away[1] from the sight of our destiny. "Since men are unable to overcome death and misery and ignorance, they persuade themselves that to be happy they have only not to think about them" (*168*). "Hence it comes that play and the society of women, war, and offices of state are so sought after." This is the reason why the chase is preferred to the quarry, and men will spend a whole day in hunting a hare which they would not have desired to buy; "the hare itself would not free us from the thought of death and of our miseries, but the chase of the hare, by diverting our attention, does free us" (*139*; XIII, 57; 392). Wherein lies the charm of dancing? In having to think carefully where to place our feet. All this bustle diverts us by turning our thoughts away from our unhappy state.

This strange misfortune which possesses the heart of man without his knowing the reason for it, is of some importance. "It is not the victory that pleases us, but the contest. . . When victory comes, we are glutted with it, and as it is in games of chance, so it is in the search for truth. We enjoy the clash of opinions in debate, but there is no enjoyment in the contemplation of the truth when found" (*135*). Yet again, what men pursue is not the thing itself, money, the hare that is hunted, victory or truth; it is the chase, the motion and the bustle, the violent and impetuous occupation that prevents them from thinking about themselves. "They believe they are honestly seeking repose, whereas in reality it is only excitement that they seek. They have a secret instinct prompting them to look for diversion and occupation from without, which arises from the sense of their perpetual suffering. They have another secret instinct, a relic of the greatness of our original nature, and this teaches them that happiness indeed consists in repose and not in turmoil; and from these two contrary instincts a confused project is formed within them, concealing itself from sight in the depths of their soul, leading them to aim at rest through excitement . . . and thus all their life rolls away" (*139*; XIII, 60-61; 393-4).

---

[1] *Divertere*, in the main sense of the word, which in Pascal's writings preserves all the force of the Latin.

People have at times contested, not the fact of diversion, for this is incontestable, but the interpretation given to it by Pascal, and the conclusions he derives from it. According to some thinkers diversion would be more easily explained by man's need to expend his surplus activity. Such an explanation is not entirely satisfactory, however; for though an animal *plays*, it does not *divert* itself, in the Pascalian sense of the word. It is the frenzy for play that is peculiar to man, and the reason for it is to be sought in his own nature. It is in this sense that Lachelier was accustomed to say that the debauchee was a great philosopher. In his own way, which is a bad one, he seeks the absolute; still, he does seek it. One single thought occupies his attention, Pascal would say, and according to the world's view it is a good thing that it should be so, but not according to God's view (*145*).

"Man is evidently made for thought; this is his whole dignity and his whole merit, and his whole duty is to think as he ought. Now the order of thought is to begin with self and with its author and its end. But what does the world think about? Never of these things, but of dancing, playing the lute, making verses, tilting at the ring, fighting; of making oneself a king, without considering what it means to be a king, or what to be a man" (*146*). And this diversion which makes us shun our own company and fear nothing so much as solitude, this diversion that amuses us and consoles us for our miseries, and is the greatest of them all, leads us imperceptibly towards death (*171*). Is it not a terrible thing to feel all that we possess slipping away from us (*212*), to think that between us and heaven or hell there is but this life, of all things the most fragile (*213*). But while he is amusing and diverting himself a man does not feel the approach of fever, or the abscess forming within him (*175*). "Cromwell was about to ravage the whole of Christendom; the royal family had been brought to naught, and his own dynasty for ever established, but for a little grain of sand lodged in his ureter. Rome herself began to tremble before him, but this scrap of gravel having taken up its place there, he dies, his family falls from power, peace is established and the king restored."[1] Moreover, "great men and unimportant men have the same accidents . . . but the one is on the rim of the wheel, and the other at its hub, and consequently less troubled by the same movements" (*180*). Whatever they may do, it is quite certain that all will have to die. "The last act is tragic, however pleasantly the play may have run through the earlier ones; at the end a handful of earth is flung on our heads, and all is over for ever" (*210*).

Is mankind, regarded in groups, of more value than the individual? And will this "man in general" who "always subsists and is perpetually learning" (II, 139-141; 80-1) remedy the defects of our human nature, by means of his institutions and his laws, and permit us to realise our destined end? Not so; and here we touch upon one of Pascal's most profound and complex, and also most commonly misunderstood views. It will help us to perceive his thought in its entirety.

Had Pascal, in his *Letter on Injustice,* any idea of denying the existence of justice? Does he actually deny it? Not at all. The spectacle afforded by human injustice is no more an argument against the existence of ideal justice, that is,

---

[1] *176.* In comparing this view of Pascal's with one that I noted above with regard to Cleopatra, and some others on chance and custom (*162*, *163*, *97*), we could extract a profound doctrine of chance from Pascal's thought. In fortuitous phenomena Pascal clearly discerned the characteristic that Henri Poincaré considers the most apt for the purpose of defining it: the disproportion between cause and effect. Let us note moreover that Pascal, in instancing such facts, by no means intends to say, whatever may have been asserted, that chance governs the world. These slight imperceptible causes are those of which God makes use in carrying out His designs.

Divine justice, than the spectacle of our failings and contradictions is an argument against the existence of truth and the sovereign good. If we stop short at appearances,[1] and take our own human concepts as the ultimate arbiters,[2] most certainly the contradictions manifest therein destroy truth, justice, and goodness. If everything is true, then nothing is, and if all ideals are valid it is because there is no ideal at all. But to him who takes these facts for *effects*, the *reason* of which must be sought because they do not contain it in themselves, all these contradictions will be accounted for, and, far from being an argument *against* justice and truth, they are an argument *for* it. They prove that justice and truth do exist,[3] but that they belong to another order. We must not judge of truth by our own capacity for conceiving it, or of morality by our own morals.[4] Still less should we attribute to these transcendental realities the contradictions to be found only in our minds and in our human nature. "Those who do not love truth find a pretext for themselves in the disputes of the multitude who deny it" (*261*). This is an error and faulty reasoning, and it comes from their not loving the truth, or charity, and having no thirst after spiritual things or after justice (*264*). They would, however, recognize it if they submitted themselves to it, for it *exists*, but it *surpasses* them.

Pascal tells us so very definitely.[5] "I have passed much of my life believing that justice existed, and in this I was not mistaken, for there is justice according as God has willed to reveal it to us." True justice is in God, and God alone (*233*). "But I did not take it so, and therein I was mistaken, for I believed that our justice was essentially just, and that I had something by which to know and judge of it. I so often found that my judgment was at fault, however, that at last I began to distrust myself and then others. I saw that all men and all countries were subject to change. . ." (*375*).

---

[1] Like the ancient Sophistry. See the author's *Notion du nécessaire chez Aristote*, pp. 37-40.

[2] This is what modern idealism does when it confines truth to the mind. (The author's contributions to the *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1921, should be read in this connection.) The "idealist" conception necessarily ends in making force the sole rule of justice and truth, in default of any other norm; this is what Hegel did.

[3] In *817* and *818* Pascal has well shown that our very errors and contradictions are a symbol of the existence of truth. "This is the reason why so many false effects are attributed to the moon, because there are some true ones, such as the tide. . . Thus instead of concluding that there are no true miracles since there are so many false, we must on the contrary say that there are true miracles since there are so many false ones, and that false miracles only exist for the reason that there are true ones."

[4] *Esprit géométrique* (IX, 260; 178). cf. *294*: "Justice? he does not know it" (yet it exists).

[5] This very important passage gives us the clue to the whole Pascalian

As a matter of fact, our human justice, changeable and relative as it is, is so far removed from the true, immutable, eternal justice[1] that the disproportion between the two is scarcely less than that between the unit and infinity. "The finite is annihilated in presence of the infinite and becomes pure nothingness. It is thus with our mind face to face with God, and with our justice in presence of the Divine justice" (*233*). And indeed, what is that which men call *justice*, upon which they base the management of the world they desire to govern? It is *custom* and custom varies with time and place. There is no doubt that *if man knew true justice*[2] he would not have propounded this maxim (the commonest throughout the world) that each man should follow the manners and customs of his own country: "the splendour of true equity would have brought all nations into subjection, and legislators would not have taken as their model the fancies and caprices of the Persians and the Germans, instead of this stable justice. We should have seen it established in all the States of the world in all times, instead of

---

doctrine of justice. Pascal believes in absolute justice, but, after having sought it in actual facts (*i.e.* in human justice), and having believed we could judge of it by our own unaided powers, he realized his error, and perceived (1) that absolute justice should not be sought in the domain of the relative and changeable; (2) that man without faith can never know either the true good or justice (*425*).

[1] True justice, says Pascal, is only found here below in the Church. *Summum jus, summa injuria*: it is not so in the Church, for there is a true justice and no violence (*878*).

[2] This part of the sentence dominates the entire development of the thought: justice exists, but he does not know it. It is the same with truth. cf. *297*: "*Veri juris*; we have it no longer; if we had, we should not take the customs of our country as our rule of justice."

which we now see neither justice nor injustice which does not change its character with its climate. Three degrees of latitude reverse all jurisprudence, and a meridian decides what truth is; fundamental laws change after a few years' tenure, and right has its epochs. . . It is an odd sort of justice that is bounded by a stream! Truth on this side of the Pyrenees, and error on that" (*294*). What is property but usurpation consecrated by time? "*This dog is mine*, said some poor children; *this is my place in the sun*. . Here you have the origin and the type of the usurpation of the whole earth" (*295*). What is it that governs disputes and decides upon war? the caprice of a single man, and one interested in the matter; "it ought to be an impartial third." Thus the essence of justice is regarded as dwelling either in the authority of the legislator, or in the convenience of the sovereign, or in the custom of the day. "Custom constitutes the whole of equity, for the sole reason that it is established." And it is the most certain thing: but it is not justice (XIII, 218; 466-7).

Shall we say that justice dwells in *natural laws*, known in all countries? But there is not one of them that is universal. "Theft, incest, infanticide, parricide, all have found a place among virtuous actions. Can there be anything more absurd than that a man should have the right to kill me because he lives across the water, and his ruler has a quarrel with mine, although I have none with him?" Let us then come to a conclusion. "*There are undoubtedly natural laws, but fair reason, once corrupted, has corrupted all.*"[1] In other words, "true nature being lost, everything becomes nature to him, just as when the true good is lost, everything becomes his true good" (*426*). "Corrupted nature. Man does not act from reason, which makes his existence" (*429*).

No longer possessing the type of true justice, we establish in its place a shadow of justice: *power*. Unable to find the just, we have discovered the powerful (*297*). Power is the queen of the world, or rather, she is its tyrant (*303, 311*). Why is it, indeed, that we follow custom? Because it is so powerful (*299*); hence all our established laws are held to be just, *because they are established* (*312*). Certainly power is necessary to enable justice to triumph, and if it relies on justice it is legitimate. Pascal says clearly and incisively: "Justice without power is unavailing, power without justice is tyrannical. We must, therefore, combine justice and power, making what is just powerful, and what is powerful just" (*298*). Justice, however, is subject to dispute among men; it is still more alien to their will than to their minds, for obedience to it cannot be enforced; power, on the contrary, is easily recognized, and has only to exist for it to be obeyed. Therefore "since we cannot make justice powerful, we have made power just, so that the just and the powerful may act together and that there may be peace, which is the sovereign good" (*299*).

---

[1] XIII, 217; 466. The italics are the author's, for this sentence throws light on all the rest. It is explained moreover by the sense given to the word "nature" in Pascal's writings, as the passages which follow clearly show.

Now in such a case what are we to do? The people only follow customs and obey laws because they believe them to be just; if not, men would not obey them, for "we will not submit to anything but reason or justice" (*325, 326*). Even those who lead unruly lives, like robbers and heretics, do this. They make for themselves laws which they rigidly obey, and accuse orderly people of behaving contrary to nature, which they believe themselves to be following (*383, 393*); a proof that every man bears within him a need for, and an idea of justice, or rather order. Must we then disabuse people's minds, reduce custom to its origin, to show how defective is its authority and justice? Must we teach men that antiquity is no proof of truth, and that the laws they obey are not just? "It would be a sure way to ruin everything" (XIII, 220; 467), for people will not fail to rebel against the accepted laws and customs if they are proved to be worthless (*325*). Now "the greatest of all ills is civil war" (*313*). We must therefore avoid giving the populace any such teaching, especially as it will always lend a ready ear; this is why

Plato was right in saying that "for man's own good one must often deceive him" (XIII, 221; 468). But to prevent all sedition, it is necessary to tell the people *at the same time* that laws must be obeyed because they are laws, "as superiors must be obeyed, not because they are upright, but because they are superiors" (*326*).

A society cannot exist without ranks or degrees; it must have a hierarchy of orders to ensure respect, "for there must be different degrees, all men wishing to rule, but not all being able to do so" (*304*). Now to whom is respect to be paid? It is power, or else imagination, that decides the matter,[1] and makes some kings, some judges, etc. (*304-08*). Custom alone impresses subjects with respect, but they, knowing nothing about this, believe that the effect arises from a natural power in their rulers. Are we to undeceive them? No. Man must not realize the truth of the usurpation, nor, in plumbing the depths of authority, must he destroy its mystic foundation, which is the simple fact of its establishment. All these things, formerly brought about without any reason, which are "the most unreasonable things in the world, become the most reasonable because of the unruly lives of men. What is less reasonable than to choose the eldest son of a queen to govern a state? We do not choose for the steersman of a ship that passenger who is of the best family." But this law, which would be both ridiculous and unjust, becomes reasonable and just on account of our human injustice, for if there were no rule, how should we select our sovereign ruler? From the most virtuous and able? But then every man will assert himself to be that, and we at once come to blows, and find ourselves involved in civil war, the worst of evils, instead of choosing "the king's eldest son, for there is something definite, with no dispute about it" (*320.* cf. *294*).

---

[1] Pascal's idea is both clear and significant. "The cords attaching the respect of man for man are, *in general*, cords of necessity," but "the cords which bind the respect of men to *any particular man* are the cords of imagination" (*304*). In other words, there must be rulers and subjects, rich and poor, but that some are to be rulers and others subjects, that these shall be wealthy and those poor, is decided by power, and, this power once established, by custom, by imagination. This twofold statement in which the whole social question is involved, serves as the starting-point for the Pascalian dialectic, for we must reconcile justice with this necessity, if it can be done.

The conclusion to be drawn from these facts is clear.[1] The people have very sound opinions, although they do not perceive the truth where it is, and place it where it is not. There is indeed truth in their opinions, but not at the point where they imagine it (*335*). Thus it is very true to say that the laws are to be obeyed, and persons of high birth respected, but not, as the people think, because the laws are just or because birth confers a real advantage, but simply because laws, as laws, must be obeyed, and superiors be respected as superiors. The half-educated, perceiving that a law is not just, or that birth is not a personal, but a fortuitous advantage, despise both laws and highly-born persons; in which they are wrong, although their reasoning may be correct; while the people are right, for a reason that escapes them, that escapes even the educated themselves,[2] but that is perceived by sublime souls, true Christians who judge these matters by a higher light. These, like the people, honour the great and obey the laws but, while speaking and acting like the people, they judge by means of their secret thoughts why such conduct is necessary; they see the reason for this effect.[3] In like manner, says Pascal with profound insight, the people are "in a state of natural ignorance, which is man's true place," since all men find themselves there at birth; now the great minds (*les grandes âmes*) who have traversed the whole realm of man's knowledge, find that they know nothing, and find themselves again in the ignorance whence they set out, but it is an instructed ignorance, conscious of itself.[1] Those among them who, having quitted their state of natural ignorance, have not been able to arrive at the other" (the partial scientists and the half-educated) "have some tincture of this vain knowledge and pretend to be wise. These trouble the world, and judge all things ill" (*327*). Between these two extremes that meet, is the balancing of the for and the against, opinions following each other according to our lights.[2]

---

[1] All the important fragments entitled *Raison des effets* or *Renversement continuel du pour au contre*, notably *324, 328-338,* should be studied carefully here. This amazing Pascalian dialectic has not attracted all the attention it deserves, or seems not to have been in general correctly interpreted.

[2] For instance, "Montaigne noted that we are annoyed by a crippled mind and that custom can do all things, but he did not see the reason of this" (*234*). The reason why we are annoyed with a crippled mind and yet have patience with a cripple is "because a cripple recognizes that we have the true use of our legs, while the fool says it is our understanding that is defective. The reason why custom should be followed is not because it is reasonable and just, whatever Montaigne may say, but because it is custom" (*325*).

[3] *336.* "*Reason of effects.* We must keep our own opinion for ourselves and judge of everything by it, even when speaking like the people." *310*: "*King and tyrant.* I, too, will, have my own secret thoughts . . . (cf. the three discourses on the condition of the great, for which this fragment seems to be the sketch). *18.* When we do not know the truth of a matter, it is a good thing that there should be a common error, etc., for this is the same thought from the other side."

*Truth is only to be found in the two extremes; with the simple and ignorant, who follow it uncomprehendingly, and with the perfect Christians, who follow it because they have grasped why they must not desire comprehension.*[3]

Now this truth, which outstrips us and which we must follow, whatever be the opposition offered, is the *respect for order*. And the order in question here is that we must *look to the general advantage* (*477*).

Perfect Christians know that the human order is folly, nevertheless they respect it and submit to its follies, "not that they respect folly, but the order of God who, for the chastening of men, has put them into subjection to these follies"; they do this with the hope that the creature will be delivered; and will know true justice and true liberty in the hereafter. *Omnis creatura subjecta est vanitati. Liberabitur.*[1]

---

[1] This "instructed ignorance, conscious of itself" is a very felicitous way of defining philosophy, which is thus allied with common sense, but enlightens it. Here Voltaire, as usual, finds fault with what he terms Pascal's "sophistry." (*Remarques*, XXXV.)

[2] Here is the complete scale of this argument, with the five degrees comprised therein: "*The reason of effects*. Gradation. The people honour persons who are well-born. The half-educated despise them, saying that birth is not a personal, but a fortuitous advantage. The educated honour them, not from the motives of the people, but from another motive. Devout persons of more zeal than knowledge despise them, in spite of the consideration which makes them honoured by the educated, because they judge by a new light which is the effect of their piety. But true Christians honour them by a still higher light. So there is a succession of opinions for and against, according to our lights.

[3] cf. ch. VI, concluding pages.

From this point we are able to discern the significance of the Pascalian criticism. Pascal starts from this fact, which he refuses to ignore: manners and customs vary; everywhere confusion and contrariety are to be found. From this the half-educated conclude that there is no system of morals, while the people still assert that there is good and evil, and that the just can be distinguished from the unjust. The people are in the right,[2] and Pascal ranges himself on their side, but he judges the matter from a secret standard of his own, for *this justice is not to be found in man, but in God.*

The half-educated, the positivists or the believers in natural religion, observe [B] that morals vary, and their conclusion is [C] that morality varies, that is, that there is no morality; because they have implicitly admitted[3] [A] that morality is reduced to morals. Pascal also observes [B] that morals vary, and that human justice is comparative and changeable, but his conclusion is [C] that morals are not morality and our human justice is not justice; because his premiss [A] was that morality or justice, if it exists, is necessarily immutable and stable.

---

[1] *338.* Pascal is here quoting St. Paul (*Romans* VIII, 20, 21). We should note moreover that from the practical point of view the rule Pascal enjoins of submitting to "folly" for the sake of preserving peace, the chief of blessings (*299*), is probably not so absolute as it at first sight appears. Were we to ask him: "Must we respect the tyrant who preserves peace with error?" he would reply: "Is it not clear that just as it is a crime to disturb the peace where truth prevails, it is also a crime to dwell in peace when the truth is assailed. There is then a time when peace is just, and a time when it is unjust. It is written that there is a time for peace and a time for war, and it is the interest of the truth to discern these. But there is not a time for truth and a time for error; on the contrary, it is written that God's truth is everlasting. And this is why Our Lord, who said that He came to bring peace, also said that He came to bring a sword; But He never said that He came to bring both truth and error. Thus truth is the first rule and the final end of all things" (*949*; XIV, 383). On the various meanings given by Pascal to the word "justice," see Appendix III.

[2] cf. Boutroux, *op. cit.* pp. 171-2.

[3] No conclusion can be drawn except from two premisses.

The error throughout all the modern juridical school, of the Right party as well as of the Left, has been to concentrate the attention upon the premiss of fact [B], so that some are obstinately bent on proving that the fact varies, and others that it does not, as if the variation of the fact necessarily involved the variation of the law, that is, its negation, or as if the immutability of the fact were essential to the proving the immutability of the law, that is, its existence. Now it is not in the facts that we shall find the law, for it is not in the relative that we find the absolute; the judge does not sit on the same bench as the accused.

Therefore, those who have desired to defend the law by seeking it in the facts, that is, by attacking the minor premiss, have forgotten one essential precept of the art of war, which is that we must give battle to the enemy, not upon the ground that he has chosen, but upon the ground that is our own choice. The partisans of the right, the law, in accepting the minor premiss for their battle-ground, were beaten before the attack began; for the facts do vary. It is just as if you, replying to the materialist who says to you: "I never met any soul on the highways; so there are no souls," were to endeavour to demonstrate that one might meet souls; for the soul is not something to be met with on the highway, or in a table, even one that turns! No more is justice something to be met with on earth, for on earth there is no law that is universal and inviolate. "All human honesty, taking it aright, is but a false imitation of that charity, that divine virtue that Our Lord came to inculcate, and it will never resemble it. At whatever point it may imitate it, there is always something lacking; or rather, everything is lacking, since it has not God for its sole aim, for, whatever those who have carried it furthest may pretend, the justice on which they plume themselves has very narrow limits, and they judge of it only in their own purlieus, which extend no further than men's interest or convenience. It is only Christ's disciples who are in the order of truly universal justice, and who, directing their gaze to the infinite, judge all things by an infallible rule, that is, by the justice of God" (Filleau, XII, ccxxvi). Justice is that higher order, subsisting in God, which man will never succeed in realizing fully here below, but which he must ever seek to approach, since it alone allows him to judge the facts aright, to condemn injustice, even when this is triumphant, and to tend to the true order.[1]

Thus by this criticism, which some may think a trifle strained, but which yet remains so profoundly and humanly true, and of such far-reaching significance, by this argument for and against, which disturbs only those who do not see the end in view, Pascal had propounded the question as it should be propounded, and had offered battle in the right place, raising us to absolute justice. For there is a justice as there is a good, and it is man's *end*, his true *nature*.[2] Why is what we call *nature* in animals called *wretchedness* in man, if not because we recognize that man has fallen from a better nature that was once his own (*409*)? And what is proved by these oppositions and contradictions, this anxiety, this perpetual need to fly from himself, if not that man is made for the infinite, that he is made for it alone, and that nothing can satisfy him but infinite justice?

[1] Note what Pascal says of "the eternal justice, not the legal, but the eternal" at the end of the fragment *692*, wherein he quotes *Daniel* IX, 24: the justice which came to bring the Deliverer, the Holy of Holies, to the world, and which here below is found in the Church alone (*878*).

[2] "The nature of man may be considered in two ways: one according to its end, and then it is great and incomparable; the other according to the opinion of the crowd, judging it as we judge of the nature of a horse or a dog, by the popular opinion which discerns in it the power of speed, or its defensive power (*animum arcendi*), and then man is abject and vile. These are the two ways which make us judge of it so differently, and which cause such disputes among philosophers. For one denies the supposition of the other; one says: he was not born for such an end, for all his actions are contrary to it; the other says: he turns away from his end when he commits these base deeds" (*415*).

# VIII

## THE PENSÉES
## MAN'S GREATNESS WITH GOD
## THE WAGER ARGUMENT

ONE of Pascal's fundamental principles, one of those which most helped him to lift the veil concealing from us reality and its author, is the use of *figures* and *symbols*.[1]

Everything has two meanings—a *literal* and a *spiritual* one; there is the *symbol* itself, and there is the *reality* symbolized. The carnal-minded stop short at the first meaning and, having found it, are satisfied with it. Thus they see natural results and attribute them to nature, without thinking that these results may have another cause (VI, 89; 215). When they have explained the world and life from the mechanistic point of view they are quite content, without thinking that there may be a cause of this mechanism itself, and that it may have been set up with a definite end in view. But when you have accounted for sight by the structure of the eye, there is nothing to prevent you from accounting for the eye-structure by its purpose or function, which is sight.[1] When you have taken into account the way in which a machine performs a certain piece of work, nothing prevents you from showing that this machine has been made by an engineer for the purpose of performing this work—on the contrary, this explains why the machine has been arranged in such a way as to produce this useful result; otherwise, we must attribute the effect to chance, which would not be rational. Mechanism is true in its own order, but that order is only an image or a figure, and the effect is of a superior order that accounts for it.

---

[1] Upon this point the following texts should be consulted: the letter to Mme Périer, Ap. 1, 1648, wherein Pascal indicates that this general, helpful idea should be frequently and attentively studied; his fourth letter to Mlle de Roannez (VI, 87-90; 214) Section X of the *Pensées*, especially *670*, *675*, *678*, and (for the use of the word *symbol*) *587*, *588*; as also the testimony of Filleau de la Chaise, XII, ccxxii: Those who listened carefully to the exposition given by M. Pascal "were transported with delight when he came to what he had gathered from the prophecies. He began by showing them that the obscurities we find therein have been inserted of set purpose, that we have even been warned of them, and that in many places it is stated that they will be unintelligible to the wicked and clear to those who are pure of heart; that Scripture has two meanings; that it is intended to enlighten some and blind the eyes of others; and that this aim appears almost everywhere and is even declared in set terms. It is also, in truth, the very foundation of this masterpiece of Scripture, and he who has comprehended it will find no more difficulty anywhere." Pascal derives this doctrine from St. Paul, especially *Romans* I, 20, and *I Cor.* X, 1-11.

Thus, in a certain sense, "nature is an image of grace" (*675*); "corporal things are only an image of the spiritual, and God has represented the invisible things in the visible" (II, 249; 88). But instead of "making use of these images to enjoy Him whom they represent," many remain "in the carnal and Jewish blindness that mistakes the figure for the reality" (II, 251; 90). There are some who rest content with the literal meaning of prophecy, and make no further search. There are others who, seeing in Jesus the perfect man, do not think of looking for any other nature in Him, or again who, when they perceive in the Eucharist the perfect appearance of bread, have no idea of seeking in it for any other substance (VI, 89; 215). But with perfect Christians this is not so, for they see everything in another light, a fresh light and a higher one (*337*). To them nothing in the appearance or the detail is changed, but the whole is re-created in their eyes by the meaning they discover in it.[2] Of such a nature is the transformation effected by the sun; the landscape has not changed, and yet, directly the sun appears, it is entirely transformed. In the same way the perfect Christian, with the invisible sun to illuminate him, perceives the order behind the disorder, the end aimed at beyond the mechanical means, the First Cause behind secondary causes, and as St. Paul, whom Pascal quotes (*Rom.* I, 20) says, he discerns the invisible God behind the nature that is revealed; and in the same way he discerns the spiritual meaning of the prophecies, recognizes God in Jesus Christ through His human guise, and recognizes Him once more in the species of bread. The others, writes Pascal in one of his most profound reflections,[1] have seen "the effects, but not the causes"; they have not perceived the reason of such effects; "compared with those who have discovered the causes they are like those who have eyes alone compared with those who have mental discernment; for the effects are as it were visible to sense, and the causes are visible to the mind alone. And although these effects may be seen by the mind, such a mind, compared with the mind that discerns the causes is as the bodily senses are to the mind." This higher mind which perceives causes and which as far surpasses the ordinary mind as this surpasses the senses, is the sole mind that is capable of reaching God behind the veils that conceal Him. Perfect Christians, who possess Him, recognize God in all things.[2]

---

[1] This was very clearly recognized by Francis Bacon, in his *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum*, (I, 5; III. 11-13). Explanation by physical causes and by final causes is in no way incompatible, he says, on condition that their realms remain distinct from one another; and he gives examples to make manifest this essential truth, "*conspirantibus optime utrisque causis, nisi quod altera intentionem, alteram simplicem consecutionem denotet.*" Berkeley's *Siris* is a fine example of this idea, which seems to be one of the dominating ideas of English thought.

[2] Herein dwells the essential characteristic of the process of "conversion." Let us note moreover that in all these cases the change bears, not upon the mechanical arrangement of the detail, which remains the same (this should satisfy the mechanistic conception), but upon its interpretation, the meaning it assumes, and the end it makes manifest.

They recognize Him in man's wretchedness.

Let us, in fact, apply this principle of symbols to human nature. This nature has appeared to us in its miserable state, but there is the reverse side which we must consider; there is another meaning of it, and this we must discover. Those who never see it know not what it may be and they are in despair. "When I behold man's blindness and wretchedness, when I survey the whole silent universe and man, without light, left to himself, and lost, as it were, in this corner of it without knowing who has put him there, what he has to do, and what he will become at death, incapable of any knowledge, I am terrified as a man might be, who during his sleep has been borne to a wild and desert island, and awakens without knowing either where he is, or how he may escape from this savage solitude. And with this image in my mind I marvel that such a state does not reduce me to utter despair." Most men, "wretched wanderers, having looked about them and seen some pleasing objects[1] have seized upon them and become attached to them. For my part, I have not been able to become so attached, and *considering that appearances indicate strongly that there is something else that I cannot see*, I have endeavoured to find out whether this God may not have left us some traces of Himself . . ." (*693*).

---

[1] 234. The *effects* correspond with the *symbols*, which are visible; the *causes* with the invisible *reality*.

[2] "All things conceal some mystery; all are veils to conceal God. Christians must see Him in all. Temporal afflictions conceal the everlasting joys to which they lead; temporal happiness conceals the eternal evils that it causes. Let us pray that God may let us recognize and serve Him in all things" (VI, 89, 90; 215).

Let us indeed look a little more closely into this wretchedness of man, and we shall not be long in discovering that there is in it more than we see at the first glance. Like all other things that have two meanings, man also is twofold.[2] His nature may be considered in two ways; according to popular opinion, and then he is abject and vile; or according to his end, and then he is great and beyond compare. Thus those who judge in the first way say: "He was not born for such a destiny, for all his acts are foreign to it."

---

[1] "Objects that divert us," says Bossuet in a sermon at Meaux on Easter Day, 1702, which is in singular agreement with this thought of Pascal's, and recalls his "Diversion."

[2] "This dichotomy in man is so evident that some persons have thought that we have two souls. A single individual seemed to them to be incapable of such great and sudden variety, ranging from unlimited presumption to terrible sinking of heart" (*417*). In this dichotomy of our nature with its tragic contradictions (symbolized in the ambiguities of Nature), which is a constant source of human disquiet and unrest, Pascal sees the mark of the fundamental *duality* of our humanity, the disproportion between what we actually are and that for which we have been created (*441*). For "concupiscence has become natural to us, and is our second nature. Thus there are two natures within us, the one good, and the other evil" (*660*). The philosophers' chief error, according to Pascal, has been their failure to recognize this fundamental fact, and their belief in the unity of human nature.

The others say: "He turns away from his aim when he commits these base deeds" (*415*). To deny truth and justice the first seize as a pretext upon the multitude of those who deny or violate it (*261*); the others judge of the multitude by the end; they have a rule or model to which they refer everything.

1. Now if we regard man from this latter point of view, which is the true one, we perceive that the greatness is measured by the wretchedness, as the wretchedness is by the greatness (*416*). "The greatness of man is so evident that it is even inferred from his wretchedness. For what in animals is nature we call in man wretchedness; thereby we recognize that his nature being now like that of the animals he is fallen from a better nature that once was his. For what man was ever unhappy at not being a king, except a discrowned king? . . . What man thinks himself unhappy in having but one mouth? What man would not think himself unhappy if he had but one eye" (*409*)? If we really consider the matter, all man's miseries prove his greatness; "they are the miseries of a great lord, a discrowned king" (*398*). A tree, a house in ruins, is not miserable, but man is miserable. Why? because he knows himself to be so (*397*, *399*). "Man is then wretched, because he *is* wretched; but he is also great, because he *recognizes* his wretchedness" (*416*). "Thought makes the greatness of man. Man is but a reed, the frailest thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed. The whole power of the universe is not needed to crush him; his overthrow is wrought by a breath of wind, a drop of water. But were the universe to crush him, man would still be more noble than that which had slain him, "because he knows that he dies, and that the universe has the better of him, but of this the universe knows nothing."[1] And Pascal expresses the entire

---

[1] *346,347*. In the MS. (folio 63) this last thought, like the one on the Two Infinites, bears a special indication. This well-known passage may be compared with one from Sebonde, with whom Pascal was very probably acquainted. "There is one way in which man differs from all other created beings, and it is, not by possessing, but by knowing that he possesses . . . Things lower than man have received from their Creator certain qualities and perfections, but they are deprived of the capability of knowing that they possess them. Man not only excels all other created beings, but he has in addition the power of

nature of this *thinking reed* in this striking image of power and justice: "By means of space, the universe encompasses and engulfs me as a pin-point; by means of thought, I encompass it" (*348*).

It is then thought that makes the man. "I can easily conceive a man without hands, feet, head (for it is only experience that teaches us that the head is more necessary than the feet). But I cannot conceive a man without thought; he would be a stone or a brute" (*339*). It is by thought that man can be distinguished from the animal; the latter always acts in the same way, and never otherwise; and it acts without reasoning: "The parrot for ever wiping its beak, even though it is clean" (*341-343*. cf. *Traité du Vide*, II, 138; 79). It is not thus with man; his whole dignity consists in thought, and it is by this that he raises himself, not by space or time, which he cannot fill. We should, therefore, endeavour to think well, for this is the starting-point of morals (*347*). To obey the dictates of reason is man's duty, for reason makes his being (*439*). "Reason commands us even more imperatively than a ruler, for in disobeying the latter we may be unhappy, but in disobeying the former we show ourselves fools" (*345*).

Now this reason is created only for infinity, and this power of thought rests in the Infinite alone. And here we have the precise significance of the unrest, disquiet and misery of man. Man is made for the infinite, and the finite cannot satisfy him, "because the infinite abyss can be filled only by an infinite, unchangeable object, that is, by God alone."[1] Thus our wretchedness leads us to God; it induces us to seek Him; still more, it proves His existence,

---

perceiving this." Further on in this work (*Liber creaturarum*), he speaks of "the rose all unconscious that it is the most beautiful of all the flowers." We see at any rate wherein Pascal is original; he proves man's greatness by arguing from his *wretchedness*, since he knows his wretchedness, and thus he marks more clearly the distinction between the two realms, man's physical littleness in the physical world, and the true seat of his greatness, which is wholly in the moral sphere, since it consists of the knowledge he has of his physical littleness.

[1] *425*. This matchless, decisive formula, superior to the Cartesian formula, gives to Descartes' thesis all its value and force. cf. the author's *Descartes*, p. 267, p. 295, note 2.

and far more effectively than any syllogism, because we see that it is the result of *an infinite and unfilled capacity*, an aspiration never fulfilled, a tendency to something ever higher, which the Infinite alone can satisfy, which the Infinite alone, consequently, could have created within us. "Man," says Pascal, "infinitely surpasses man" (*434*; XIII, 347; 531) and this, not only because "we are occupied with matters that take us out of ourselves" and "our instinct makes us feel that we must seek our happiness outside ourselves" (*404*), but still more because, in the finite, imperfect being that we are, there are aspirations that transcend it and can only be due to the impulse proceeding from a higher cause. And since these aspirations ascend to the infinite and will never be satisfied until they attain their aim, the cause that has given us and continues to give us this impulse must be an infinite cause—God. He alone is our true good; He alone is our end since He alone is our true beginning, the source of our being and the source of all things (*489*; cf. Pascal's letter of 1st April, 1648, II, 250; 89).

2. Our wretchedness enables us to perceive by contrast, and by our distance from it helps us to measure, the end for which we have been created, the degree of greatness and perfection from which we have unhappily fallen. We desire the truth, and within us there is but uncertainty. We seek happiness, and find but misery and death. We cannot help desiring truth and happiness, yet we are incapable of either certainty or happiness. This desire persists in us, as much for our chastening as to make us feel the depths to which we have fallen" (*437*; cf. *434*; XIII, 347-8; 532). We are all the more miserable for having fallen from so high (*416*); thus, as we obtain more enlightenment, we are more fully conscious of both our wretchedness and our greatness, of both the depths to which we have fallen, and the height whence we fell, of our corrupt nature and our true nature, or our end. The disproportion between these makes the greatness still more clear, and we should not be so definitely conscious of the one if we were not equally conscious of the

other. "Greatness, to be truly felt, must be left behind us," says Pascal with profound truth; such rhythm is a law of nature, and it has its counterpart in human nature.[1] "Continual eloquence bores us" (*355*). Thus, joy is not really understood and tasted save through suffering; those alone who have suffered know what it is to be happy. So, too, the infinite greatness of thought is not perceived until we have experienced and measured all that drags it down, all the artificiality due to deceitful appearances, reinforced by heredity and custom, which at times is able to dominate and repress our instinct.[1] Finally the great mystery of the Redemption, the source of infinite graces, could not be so thoroughly realized if we did not realize the feebleness and corruption of nature and the strength of the concupiscence it has overcome. These two truths should be taught together. It is as dangerous for man to know God without knowing his wretchedness, for this leads him to pride, as it is to know his wretchedness without knowing God, without knowing the Redeemer who can save him from it, for this conduces to despair (*556*, *586*).

3. But there is something more. Our wretched state not only permits of our inferring the existence of greatness; it not only allows us to estimate it better by force of contrast: it is also in some way the *symbol* of our greatness. Our wretchedness is like a reflection of our greatness; the order of concupiscence is as it were the image and figure of the

---

[1] "Man's nature is not to advance always; it has its periods of ebb and flow. Fever has its hot and its cold fits; and the cold ones indicate the extent of the fever as much as the hot ones. Man's inventions go on from age to age, and the goodness and the wickedness of the world in general is the same (*354*) . . . Nature acts progressively, *itus et reditus*. It comes and it goes, then it advances further, falls back twice as far, then less, and so on. The movement of the waves on the seashore occurs thus, and the sun seems to follow its path in like manner" (*355*). In passing we should draw attention to this noteworthy view of the *rhythm* which is manifest in our human nature, in our affective as well as in our active life, in the development of our art as in the very progress of our science—a rhythm that so closely connects our life with the general law of the universe. Here again we have one of the remarkable instances of the way in which Pascal's thought forestalled many of our scientific discoveries, and with one step reached the heart of things.

[2] "Two things instruct a man about his whole nature: instinct and experience" (*396*).

order of charity,—a misty reflection, a distorted image, yet nevertheless reflection and image. "In his very concupiscence man's greatness is seen, in that he should have been able to derive admirable order from it and to have made from it a rule of charity.—The reasons of effects manifest man's greatness, that he should have drawn so good an order from concupiscence" (*402, 403*).

Very frequently our wretchedness is but an ill-regulated good, or a distorted truth: of this many examples can be given.

Thus "man's greatest vileness is the seeking after glory, but that very quality is his highest sign of excellence. . . He esteems the power of reason so highly that whatever earthly advantages he may possess do not satisfy him, if he is not well thought of by reasoning men" (*404*; cf. *400, 401*).

"Evil is easy, and its forms are infinite; good is almost unique. But a certain kind of evil is as difficult to find as what is called good, and often on this account this particular kind of evil gets passed off as good. An unusual greatness of soul is often needed to attain to it, as well as to good" (*408*). The very excess of the evil, of passion or pride, reveals a power of the soul, only ill-directed, and a desire for the absolute, though the desire is fixed upon the wrong object.[1]

Superstition or credulity is a vice that is natural to men, like incredulity, says Pascal, and it is just as harmful (*254*). "Two excesses: to exclude reason" (superstition), "and to admit reason only" (incredulity) *253*. Many men who profess to believe only that which is demonstrable refuse on that account to admit the truth of the existence of God, an eminently rational truth, at which Plato and Aristotle arrived twenty-three centuries ago by the unaided power of reason. Such people, however, will accept the most absurd theories and the first fable they hear.[1] "The incredulous are the most credulous. They believe the miracles of Vespasian in order that they may not believe those of Moses" (*816*). However, let us look into the matter more closely. This harmful credulity is only the aberration of a very profound instinct, one deeply-rooted in man's heart, the instinct of religion;[1] an ineradicable instinct, for when it is cut off in one direction it springs up in another; superstition is always flourishing when faith is at a low ebb. What is to be done? We must enlighten this instinct, raise and direct it.

---

[1] It is in such a sense that Descartes, at the beginning of his *Discours* writes: "The greatest souls are as capable of the greatest vices as of the greatest virtues." cf. Lachelier's remark: "The debauchee is a great philosopher." Nevertheless he is not a sage.

[2] What is to be thought of a man whom I met one day, quite exultant,

We are subject to two contrary impulses. Diversion tends always to draw us away from ourselves, by self-love we refer everything to ourselves again. Now what is more frivolous than diversion? Nevertheless the instinct that makes us feel that we must look for happiness outside ourselves, the instinct that drives us forth, does not deceive us, whatever the Stoic philosophers may say; for "there are many things within us to send us forth. . . And thus it is vain for the philosophers to say: 'Retire within yourselves, there will you find your real good'; it is not true, and those who believe it is are the most frivolous and foolish" (*464*). On the other hand, nothing is so opposed to charity as greed or self-love yet again, nothing resembles it more closely (*663*), for greed is only another form of love. We must not entirely suppress this love of self, but we must regulate it, "in order to love God only and to hate self alone" (*476*). And "to regulate the love which we owe to ourselves, we must imagine a

---

who, upon my asking him why he was so gay, told me: "It is because my soul after death is to inhabit the body of a crocodile"? As I was unable to grasp the joyous nature of this prospect, he confided to me: "Why, you see, I might have fallen straight away into the mineral kingdom, and then my cycle of existences would have finished sooner." He believed this very firmly, although the existence of God seemed beyond the power of his reason. Such a case is not unique, I am informed.

[1] *262*. Superstition and concupiscence
scruples evil desires
evil fears

The arrangement of Pascal's MS. (fol. 344) shows that he opposes superstition, with scruples and evil fears, which are the distortion of a good, to concupiscence or the desire for evil. cf. *817* and *818*: "How it happens that men believe so many liars, who say they have seen miracles, and do not believe any of those who say they have secrets to make men immortal or rejuvenate them."

body full of thinking members, for we are members of the whole" (*474*) and therefore we must subordinate, or rather, conform our own will to the will which governs the whole body, for herein is order.[1] Thus we see that "happiness is neither without us nor within us; it is in God, both without us and within us" (*465*).

Lastly, let us consider human justice. Is it not odd to see so many "people in the world who, having renounced all the laws of God and nature, have yet made laws for themselves which they rigidly obey, as for instance the soldiers of Mahomet, thieves, heretics, etc., and also logicians . . ."[2] Those who have done away with so many necessary or sacred barriers have not succeeded in getting rid of the instinct of justice, since they endeavour to *justify their irregularity.* So, too, despite so many contrarieties and contradictions, human beings always aspire to obey justice; the people only conform to laws and customs because they believe them to be just (*326*). The savage who feeds on the flesh of his parents does so religiously and "as a testimony to his filial affection and piety," as Montaigne had justly observed. At the bottom of all our unjust dealings the instinct of justice is always to be found. This instinct is ill-directed, it has gone astray, most certainly; and yet is it not astonishing to see how "men have found and drawn from the realm of materiality excellent rules of policy, morals, and justice," and how these are made to serve the public welfare (*453, 451*)? In this we have "a false image of charity," no doubt, but it is still an image, and the perfect Christian, who has outstripped the order of logical reasoning, and judges things by a higher light, respects this order willed by God, in which, limited as it is, is to be discerned the figure of the true order, the order of charity, where justice and truth subsist eternally and unalloyed in God.[1]

---

[1] Pascal has an admirable series of reflections on this subject. "*Members. To begin with that*" (*473* to *483*). "If the feet and hands had each an individual will, they could only be in their order in submitting this will to the primary will governing the whole body. Apart from that they are disordered and unfortunate, but in willing only the good of the body they find their own good" (*475*). "All tends to self. This is contrary to all order. If the members of natural and civil communities conduce to the well-being of the body, the communities themselves must conduce to the well-being of another more general body of which they are members. We should therefore look to the whole. We are, then, born unjust and depraved" (*477*). "To ensure the happiness of the members, they must have one will and submit it to the body" (*480*). This idea is wholly in accord with the Stoic doctrine. *Vide* Epictetus, *Discourses* II, 5 and 10, for a similar comparison. We shall see later how Pascal, following St. Paul (I *Cor.* XII, 12-27; *Rom.* XII, 4-5), gave a supernatural meaning to this comparison, considering us as members of Christ.

[2] This last touch is delicious in its irony, and well-merited. Those "logicians" who deny all Divine and natural laws subject themselves and nature to the laws of their own forging, laws which they set up as a metaphysical necessity.

What then is man? The most miserable and the greatest of all created beings. Suspended between the two infinites, he is nothing in regard to the infinite, but a whole in regard to nothing. We ask ourselves at times how it is that God can interest Himself especially in an imperceptible atom, like one of us, lost in the mighty womb of the whole. Following Pascal's wonderful intuition I reply: If the study of the constellations has reduced us to the rank of an atom, the study of atoms has raised us to the rank of a colossus, a world, a whole; and again, by thought we encompass this universe which encompasses us. Thus we are placed at the perspective centre of the universe; a mean between nothing and the whole. "If we quit the middle position we quit humanity. The greatness of the human soul is to be able to retain its place there" (*378*). After having studied nature let us consult our own nature. Our conclusions will be the same. As we gain more light, we find more wretchedness in our state, but also proportionately more greatness; the one involves the other (*416*). "Despite the sight of all the miseries which touch us and grapple with us, we have an irrepressible instinct that raises us" (*411*).

---

[1] *337, 338, 878.* cf. the end of the twelfth *Provinciale* (V, 386-7): "The war that violence wages when it would suppress truth is a long, strange war. All the efforts made by violence cannot weaken the truth; instead they only serve to exalt it. All the light that truth can bring to bear is unavailing to stop violence, and it only serves to inflame it yet more. When power attacks power, the stronger force destroys the weaker. . . but violence and truth can gain no advantage over one another. Let us not, however, conclude from this that they are equal, for there is this great difference, that violence has but one course to pursue, limited by God's order, which makes its results conduce to the glory of the truth attacked, whereas truth is eternal, and finally triumphs over the enemy, seeing that it is eternal and powerful like God Himself."

Such is man; neither angel nor brute. "Man must not believe that he is the equal of the brute or of the angel, nor must he ignore them both; he must know them both" (*418*; cf. *358*). "If he exalt himself I humble him; if he humble himself, I exalt him, and I perpetually contradict him until he learns that he is an incomprehensible abnormality" (*420*).

Now what is man to do, faced as he is by these amazing contradictions in human nature?[1] It is impossible for him, however little reason he may possess, to remain indifferent to them. Knowing what he is he must of necessity desire to know also whence he comes and whither he is going, especially since upon the answer to these questions depend all our actions and thoughts, the entire regulation of our lives. "To be or not to be, that is the question." To be able to answer it, man must know whence he derives the element of greatness and the element of wretchedness that are within him. The true religion is that which will *account for* these amazing contradictions (*430*) and which, by so doing, will reveal to him the secret of his destiny. It is impossible that he should not seek it, now that he knows his value, now that he both *hates* and *loves* himself, and knows that within him there is an *infinite* and *unfilled capacity*, that "he has within him the capacity to know the truth and be happy, but . . . has no truth that is either constant or satisfying. I would then," adds Pascal, "induce man to desire to find it, to be prepared, freed from his passions, to follow it where he may find it . . ."[2]

Here is the *knot*. How will he unravel it?

Pascal has disturbed man's mind; he has brought him into the mood to search for truth.[1] He sends him first of all to the philosophers, to try to obtain from them both the clue to the enigma and the remedy for all our ills. But the philosophers are powerless; the one makes man the equal of God, the other likens him to the brutes. They contradict one another, and they contradict themselves; for man's wretchedness belies the dogmatists, and his greatness belies the sceptics, and both wretchedness and greatness are inferred from each other. "*Instinct. Reason.* We have an incapacity for proof, which no dogmatism can overcome. We have an idea of truth, which no scepticism can conquer."[2] Thus, "all their premisses are true . . . but their conclusions are false, because the contrary premisses are also true" (*394*), so that neither from the dogmatist nor from the sceptic can we arrive at truth. How then can they offer us remedies for ills which they have not even known?[3] The sceptics escape pride and vanity only to plunge us into sloth, despair, or the sensual appetites which are the heritage of animals; the dogmatists avoid this extreme only to go astray through pride. "Thus these two conditions, which it was necessary to know in conjunction in order to see the whole truth, being known separately, inevitably lead to one or other of these two vices, pride and sloth," which are the source of all our ills (IV, 53; 160).

---

[1] (XII, clxxxiii; 305) *Beginning, after having explained incomprehensibility*. *430*. The term "incomprehensible" in the fragment *420* should also be noted. cf. *194*: "The immortality of the soul is of such immense importance to us and touches us so nearly that we must have lost all feeling to be in a state of indifference to the question."

[2] *423*. *Contradictions*. *After having demonstrated the wretchedness and the greatness of man.*

---

[1] For what follows, see *430*, *431* (XII, clxxxiv; 305). cf. *Entretien* IV, 53; 160.

[2] *395*. This thought, which presents the whole Pascalian doctrine of knowledge in miniature, should be compared with *344* ("Instinct and reason, signs of two natures") and the important fragment *434*, quoted below. Comparing these various passages carefully, we see that Pascal uses the words *instinct*, *nature*, *natural principles*, *idea of truth* in the same sense. (cf. *Esprit géométrique*, IX, 247-9; 168-9; and the *Art de persuader*, IX 289; 195. Also *29*, upon "natural style" and that "nature" which "can discuss everything, even theology"). There is then in us a natural *sense* which permits us *to judge correctly and justly*: (*1*) which Pascal opposes, like intuitive intelligence or "sentiment" (cf. *95*) to discursive intelligence or the reasoning "reason," which proceeds by progressive reasoning and endeavours to demonstrate step by step as in geometry (*1*). This Pascal as a rule designates (in the *Pensées*, at any rate) by the term "reason," which, to him, as to all the Schoolmen, is the equivalent of "reasoning", as his manuscript clearly shows in certain passages, although he had formerly taken it in a very different sense and opposed it to the *instinct of animals* (cf. *Traité du Vide*, II, 137; 79. *Esprit géométrique*, IX, 257; 175: "great natural clarity, which convinces the reason more strongly than discourse"; eighteenth *Provinciale*, VII, 50). Thus we understand how it is that Pascal could write "Instinct and reason, signs of two natures." This *instinct*, or this idea of truth, or more precisely this natural capacity for knowing truth and being happy (*423*) is a remnant in us of our first nature, our *true nature*, just as it left the hands of the Creator, of that nature, now corrupt, which denotes everywhere a lost God (*441*), and the knowledge of which is bound up with man's knowledge of his true good, of true virtue and true religion (*442*). "For indeed, if man had never been corrupted, he would rejoice in his innocence and truth and felicity with assurance, and if man had never been other than corrupt, he would have no idea of truth or blessedness" (*434*; XIII, 347; 531-2)

[3] *430;* XIII, 332; 524. *435*. *Entretien*, IV, 53; 60.

> What a chimera then is man! how strange and monstrous! a chaos, a contradiction, a prodigy. Judge of all things, yet a sorry earth-worm; depositary of truth, yet a cesspool of uncertainty and error; the glory and the garbage of the universe.
>
> Who will unravel such a tangle? Nature confounds the Pyrrhonists, and reason the dogmatists.[1] What then will become of you O men! who by your natural reason search out your true condition? You cannot avoid one of the sects, yet you cannot live in any.
>
> Know then, pride, how great a paradox you are to yourself. Humble yourself, weak reason; be silent, foolish nature; learn that man infinitely surpasses man, and from your master learn your true condition which you know not. Hear God (*434*).

Since men cannot enlighten man about his condition,[2] will he not at any rate learn from God what he is seeking, if it has pleased God to communicate with men and give them some signs of their origin and of His design for them? And with this hope, traversing the whole universe and all the ages, he encounters an infinite number of religions, and examines each in turn—pagan religions, the religions of China and Mexico, and the Mahommedan faith (*592-601*).

---

[1] In our true nature we have an instinct which proves to sceptics that we are capable of truth. But the incapacity of our reasoning reason manifests to the dogmatists that we cannot arrive at truth by our own unaided strength. (See note 2 of the preceding page.)

[2] For all that follows, see Filleau de la Chaise (XII, ccvi-ccvii), and the *Préface de Port-Royal* (XII, clxxxiv; 306).

But what does he find in this search? Popular religions beginning and ending with themselves: they authorize vice; they are established in some cases by force and in others by imposture; they have no witnesses,[1] no proofs, no foundation or authority; their obscurities are judged by their absurd clarities; their cult is purely external and gross; and they leave man unenlightened as to the nature of God and his own nature. "Finally" (and this is the *dénouement*) "rather than choose any one of them and find a resting-place in it, he would prefer to put an end to himself, to escape once for all from a state so miserable; but then, when he is ready to fall into the lowest depths of despair, he discovers a certain people, which from the outset attracts his attention by many wonderful and unique circumstances" (XII, ccvii).

This is the Jewish people. The deeper one probes into the religion of the Jews, the more its truth is confirmed, and it appears "wholly divine in its authority, its duration, its antiquity, its moral code, its doctrine, and its results" (*602*). This people, differing from all others, sprung from a single man, worships a single God, and maintains that to it alone God has revealed His mysteries, and that all the rest of the world is in error (*618*, *619*). These Jews are governed by a law, the most severe and rigid of all laws, which they declare to have been given them by His own hand, a law which indeed is wholly admirable, and the most ancient in the world, since they had received and followed it uninterruptedly for nearly a thousand years before the word *law* was in use among the Greeks (*619*, *620*). And finally, the book containing the law by which these people govern themselves is not only a book received from God, but a book which they have made, and which in its turn has formed them (*594*). In this respect it differs not only from the *Iliad* but from Egyptian and Chinese histories (*628*), and the more one meditates upon it, the more clearly it appears an inexhaustible source of light. Now this book, manifestly due neither to chance nor to men, this book, to which the Jewish people has remained constantly attached for more than two thousand years as the *sole*, *immutable* truth, while the world around was swarming with errors, this book, to the truth of which the Jewish people, precisely because it has not listened to it and has failed to recognize the Messias it predicted, remains an irreproachable witness (*641*, *761*), is seen to pass out of Jewish hands to those of the Christians, who spread its teaching throughout the world. In circumstances of such importance it is impossible to remain indifferent, and to take no trouble to ascertain whether what this book says is true. The other religions have not been able to teach us "our supreme good, our duties, the weaknesses which prevent us from carrying them out, the cause of these weaknesses, the remedies that will prove effectual, and the means of obtaining these remedies." Let us see what the Wisdom of God, as this book reveals it to us, will do.

---

[1] "I believe only those histories whose witnesses would suffer death for them." (*593*).

> "Look not for truth," she says, "nor consolation from men. I am she who framed you, and who alone can teach you what you are. But you are no longer in the state in which I framed you. I created man holy, innocent, perfect; I filled him with light and intelligence; I communicated my glory and my marvels to him. The eye of man then beheld the majesty of God; he was not then in the darkness which blinds him, nor subject to death and to the ills which afflict him. But he could not sustain so great a glory without falling into the sin of presumption. He would make himself his own centre, and be independent of my aid. He withdrew himself from my domination, and when he made himself equal to me through his desire to find his happiness in himself, I gave him over to self. Then, setting in revolt the creatures that were subject to him, I made them his enemies; so that man is now become like the beasts, and so far removed from me that there scarce remains to him a dim ray of light from his Creator, so greatly has his knowledge become ex-

> hausted and disturbed. His senses, independent of reason, and often its master, have carried him astray in the pursuit of pleasure. All creatures either torment or tempt him; they dominate him, either in subduing him by their strength, or melting him by their charms, a tyranny yet more terrible and more imperious.
>
> "Such is the state of men to-day. There remains to them some feeble instinct of the happiness of their original nature, and they are overwhelmed by the misery of their blindness and their concupiscence which has become their second nature."[1]

This theory sets out the cause of very many of the contradictions that have astonished man, contradictions which no one has been able to explain. For this is the source of our greatness and of our wretchedness: "You are not in the state in which you were created" (XIII, 333; 524). It is because they have not recognized this that all have been deceived;[2] some, noting in man some traces of his former greatness and ignoring his state of corruption, have thought that nature is sane and self-sufficing, that it has no need of a redeemer, and this leads them to the height of pride. Others, experiencing our present wretchedness and knowing nothing of man's former dignity, consider nature to be weak and past mending, and this throws them into despair and thence into an extreme of cowardice. The Christian religion alone, heir to the Jewish tradition and to the Law of which it is the fulfilment and perfect consummation,[3] has grasped man's whole nature and accounted for it, at the same time teaching us how to remedy it (*433*, *441*); it has shown us that all the weakness in it belongs to our (fallen) nature, and that all its power is due to grace, that it is from God alone that we can demand strength, and that He will not refuse it us, if we ask Him humbly and lovingly. Here is the wonderful new union which God alone can teach, and He alone can effect, which is but a type and a result of the ineffable union of two natures in the one person of a God-Man, Jesus Christ (*Entretien* IV, 54; 160).

---

[1] *430*. XIII, 329-331; 522-3. Note in the last sentence the use of the word "nature" in two senses, and the term "instinct" employed to denote the last trace of our original nature.

[2] *Entretien* (IV, 52; 159); Filleau, XII, ccxiv.

[3] Filleau, XII, ccxxvii. *Préface de Port-Royal*, XII, clxxxvi; 308.

Here is the mediator promised to men and expected by a whole nation, he who was to bring about this great reconciliation. "The knowledge of God without that of our wretchedness induces pride; the knowledge of our wretchedness without the knowledge of God induces despair; but the knowledge of Jesus Christ forms the middle point, because here we find both God and our wretchedness" (*527*). "*Source of contradictions.*" A God humiliated even to the death on the cross; a Messias, by His death triumphant over death. Two natures in Jesus Christ, two advents,[1] two states of nature for man (*765*). Therefore "Jesus Christ is the object of all and the centre towards which everything tends. He who knows Him knows the reason for all things" (*565*; XIV, 4; 580).

This knowledge throws a wonderful light upon all things, and primarily upon our human nature; it helps us to see clearly into ourselves and into the order of the universe; it answers all the questions that present themselves; it explains our very mysteries by the impenetrable designs of God, who is a hidden God, for it is right, and beneficial for us "that He should conceal Himself from those who tempt Him, and shew Himself unto such as search after Him,"[2] because men are at the same time unworthy of God, and capable of God; unworthy through their corruption, capable through their original nature" (*557*, *586*).

Just as this Divine knowledge teaches us the *whole truth*, so does it propose to us and promise us the means of arriving at *true virtue* (*435*). It provides a cure for our two vices of pride and sloth, "not in getting rid of the one by the other through earthly wisdom, but by getting rid of both through the simplicity of the Gospel" in which "God has shown us two qualities in Him that can cure them, His mercy and His justice" (*497*). It cures pride by humility, for it makes the righteous man, raised to participate in the Divine nature, but still bearing within himself the source of all corruption, fear and tremble, while it consoles and reassures the most miserable, for it tells them that they are capable of the grace of their Redeemer. Thus the true religion, tempering fear with hope, humbles men infinitely more than reason can, yet without reducing them to despair; and it raises them infinitely more than natural pride, yet without making them arrogant. Finally, it teaches us to renounce ourselves, to find ourselves in God. "If there be only one origin of all things, only one end of all; all by Him, all for Him. The true religion then must teach us to adore Him alone, and to love Him only" (*489*). For fear and adoration themselves, separated from love, are but dead feelings. Yet what other than the Christian religion has ever made this love of God the essential part of its worship?[1]

---

[1] On the two advents of the Messias, humble and glorious, secret and in splendour, cf. *642*, *757*; *678*: "Two advents—the one in wretchedness, to lower man's pride, the other in glory, to raise humiliated man" (*679*). "A God humiliated even to the cross. It was essential that Christ should suffer, to enter into His glory; that He should destroy death through His own death (*Heb.* II, 14).

[2] cf. *Wisdom*, I, 2.

What is there then for a man of sense and good faith but to recognize that nothing approaching this has been said before, and that, if there be a true religion, this must be it, and that it should be believed, if *there be the least proof?*[2] "These two states being evident"—creation, sin; greatness, feebleness—"it is impossible for you to avoid recognizing them. Follow this up; observe your own selves, and see whether you do not find living characteristics of these two natures" (*430*; cf. *434*). "For is it not as clear as day that we feel within ourselves ineradicable signs of an exalted nature, and is it not just as true that at all times we are conscious of our pitiable state? What else can this chaos and this monstrous confusion imply if not the truth of these two states, made known to us in a way that cannot be gainsaid?" Hence "who can refuse to believe and adore these celestial truths" (*435*) *if there be any convincing proofs whatsoever to authorize them?* (XIII, 336; 526).

---

[1] Pascal attached "particular importance" to this point, in which he found "a very special characteristic" which "visibly differentiates the true religion from all others." Filleau de la Chaise (XII, ccxi-ccxii) and the *Préface de Port-Royal* (XII, clxxxv; 307).

[2] Filleau (XII, ccxiv). cf. *Préface de Port-Royal* (XII, clxxxv-vi; 307). "Although Pascal, after having conducted his man (whom he proposed to convince without his perceiving it) to this point, has as yet said nothing to persuade him of the truths he has made him discover, he has nevertheless put him in the mood to receive them with pleasure, provided that he can be made to see that he should pay attention to them, and to wish with all his heart that they were true and well-founded. . . There is ground for believing that after that he would readily apply himself to all the proofs the author will later bring forward to confirm the certainty and the clarity of all the important truths of which he had spoken, truths which form the basis of the Christian religion which he hoped to inculcate." These indications (in which Filleau de la Chaise and Étienne Périer are in perfect agreement) coming at this precise

Nevertheless the unbeliever is not yet convinced. Possibly he begins to have a secret fear that in believing such a religion to be false he may be mistaken, and even to wish in his heart that it may prove true (*241*). But "there is nothing to enlighten us," he says. "What am I to do? I look all around, and in every direction there is only darkness. Nature offers me nothing but what is a matter for doubt and anxiety" (*227-9*). "—Incomprehensible.—"[1] And

point in the argument are of extreme importance, and they have not been sufficiently dwelt upon in what concerns Pascal's projected design and the very interpretation of his doctrine. To me they seem to signify that the argument derived from our twofold nature and its explanation through Creation and the Fall is not considered by him (whatever may usually be thought) as a *necessary proof of the truth of Christianity*, but as *a preparation of the mind to receive the proofs*. This fact, which he introduces to our notice in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, makes us conceive the hope that we may possibly find there the remedy for our ignorance and our ills, but this remedy is *still to be established*. Pascal does not rest content with a kind of top-dressing of pragmatism, which without further investigation concludes, from *the interest that certain things have for us*, they must necessarily be *true in themselves*. His aim is to attain truth after full investigation.

[1] *430*; XIII, 334; 524. In Pascal's manuscript this word stands alone on the line, being emphasized. It appears just after Pascal's exposé of the two states of man and his twofold nature. It may be compared with the fragment on the wager, which bears the title "Infinite-nothing," and might equally well be designated "Incomprehensible." Compare it above all with the development of the idea introducing and surrounding the wager, in which this same question of incomprehensibility and the same arguments of "infinite number" are introduced again. Does this not seem to convey that the "wager" ought to find its right place at this very point of Pascal's argument? After having hesitated for a long time about the place of the wager in the *Apology*, and, like M. Lanson, having asked myself whether it was destined to be there, this argument seemed to throw light upon the matter and to clear up many other points.

indeed it is incomprehensible that God should exist, that we have been created, that sin can be transmitted. This is true. But *because a thing is incomprehensible it does not cease to exist.* This is so with an infinite number, an infinite space equal to the finite; so, too, with a point moving in all directions with infinite velocity, which fills all space; infinite movement, a moment of rest, infinite without quantity, indivisible and infinite (*231*, *232*). These "natural effects" seem impossible to you because they exceed your understanding, or merely, perhaps, because you are not accustomed to them; but they exist nevertheless, and should make you realize that there may be others that you do not know as yet, and that there is an infinite amount for you to learn still. Thus, the transmission of sin not only appears to you *impossible*, it even seems to you very *unjust*. Yet "without this mystery, the most incomprehensible of all,[1] we are incomprehensible to our own selves . . . so that man without this mystery is more inconceivable than this mystery is inconceivable to man" (*434*; XIII, 349, 532). On the other hand, God's justice must not be judged by our reason, and according to our justice; our mind is annihilated in the presence of God, our justice His justice, as the finite in the presence of the infinite (*233*). Moreover, "if there be a God, we should not say that He cannot do anything unjust, but rather that what He does cannot be unjust since His will is the sole criterion of good and evil."[1] There can be no question of sketching out the limits to the power of God, or of deciding what He can and cannot do. Our sole concern is to know what He has done, and what actually *is*, for it is enough to show that things are, to show that they are neither impossible nor unjust. The whole question then is to know whether those who assure us that they are, have the means to make themselves believed; whether they possess incontestable signs which endow them with authority—in other words, whether there are any proofs.

---

[1] There is little doubt that Pascal, following in this St. Augustine (Tixeront, *Histoire des dogmes* II, pp. 468, 481, 4th ed. 1912), exaggerates whatever is incomprehensible and offensive to the reason in the doctrine of original sin, especially when he declares with St. Augustine that children dying unbaptized are doomed to everlasting fire, for this is a doctrine that the Catholic Church has not sanctioned in its entirety, and which it has even singularly mitigated by refusing to condemn as Pelagian the doctrine that unbaptized children go at death, not to eternal fire, but to limbo (Denzinger, 1389), contenting itself (Council of Florence, Denzinger, 588) with placing them in hell, but without their suffering the same penalties as those who are condemned for personal sins. For a long time Catholic theologians have regarded existence, for such children, as better than non-existence. We must not forget moreover that to Catholic theologians there are only two places in the Beyond—heaven for the blessed, and hell for those who are not yet, or who never will be, in heaven. This "hell" thus comprises, not only hell properly so called, the place of torment for the damned, but also purgatory, for those souls which need purification before they can be admitted to heaven, and limbo for those who have died in their original sin only, that is, deprived of sanctifying grace (which has always been purely a privilege for our human nature), a deprivation which constitutes original sin, and which thus renders them incapable of being admitted to heaven. Pascal then has exaggerated the position, but in any case this exaggeration does not affect the basis of his argument, for it remains true that original sin is a mystery, and that it is incomprehensible, and these points are a sufficient basis for his argument.

Yes indeed, but no proof is actually conclusive if the mind be not disposed to receive it. Mathematical proofs are conclusive, but they leave us cold. In this case, says Pascal to the unbeliever, you will not have any such. "A miracle," you say, "would strengthen my belief." People say so when they do not see any, but if they see them and do not want to accept them, they never have any trouble in finding some good reason for refusing. It is not a universal law, they will say; there are exceptions to it, and the present case is one, and so on (*263*). Let us realize this clearly. No proof will force a man to be converted if he does not desire to be converted, that is, to abase himself before God, the Universal Being (*470*), to overcome the three concupiscences of the flesh, of the mind, and of the eyes, that turn him away from Him (*460*).

---

[1] Filleau de la Chaise (XII, ccxxi). This is a very important passage, and it is in entire conformity with Pascal's view, for he refuses to judge of the *reality* of things by their *possibility* for us. Pascal endeavours to establish the fact. If the fact exists, if it is *real*, it is then *possible*. And for this reason, adds Filleau, "it would be useless to reply that we have proofs that these things are unjust and impossible in order to show that they cannot exist, as we say that we have proofs that they actually exist, to show that they are neither unjust nor impossible." It is to be noted that here Pascal, though in quite a different spirit, comes into line with the Cartesian theory which makes the very essence, the good and the true, depend on the Divine will. And it is also noteworthy that he here proclaims the *autonomy of the historical method* as opposed, for instance, to the physical.

This is the reason why, before entering upon the proofs of the Christian religion, we must lead man to seek (*195*), for God conceals Himself from those who tempt Him, and manifests Himself to those who seek Him.[1] We must then make man aware of the injustice of such indifference on a subject which deals with himself and his whole existence; we must lead him to realize "that there are only two kinds of people who may be termed reasonable; either those who serve God with their whole hearts because they know Him, or those who seek Him with their whole hearts because they do not know Him."[2] It cannot be a question here of amusing oneself, or of passing an idle hour. We must try to find a solution—in short, we must *take sides*, we must make an act of the will—*a voluntary act*.[3] Then, and then alone, the proof will be accomplished, because then alone the proofs will be convincing.

It is the setting of the will to work that is needed. We must make man decide to take the step, and for this purpose, in Pascal's mind, the argument of the wager will serve.[4]

To be able to comprehend this well-known argument, so often discussed, and still misunderstood, to which modern thought returns incessantly as the moth to the candle, we must clearly understand to whom it is addressed. To determine its exact significance, we must first of all grasp its destined aim.

Pascal is addressing the unbeliever, the sceptic, the gambler, whom he has possibly succeeded in disturbing, whose heart inclines to find out where truth lies that it may follow it, but who, seeing too much to deny it and not enough to assure himself of it, remains in suspense, not knowing which side to take.[1]—Find out, Pascal says to him.—And this man, lacking courage says: I cannot, or: I do not know how (*195*, *196*)—Let us consider the matter. What are your reasons? You profess to say only those things that are perfectly clear. Now is it perfectly clear that matter thinks, and that it subdues the passions? You declare the Resurrection to be impossible, and that it is impossible for a virgin to bear a child? But why should not a virgin bear a child? Is it more difficult to rise again than to be born, to return to existence than to enter upon it? Habit causes the one to seem easy to us, and the want of habit makes the other seem impossible.[2] Realize once for all that your reason is limited in its scope, and that it cannot estimate truth by its own conceptions or subject God to the temporal and spatial conditions to which it is confined by the fact of its being enclosed in a mortal body.[3]

---

[1] *577, 288.* In the *Abrégé de la vie de J-C.* §117 (XI, 39), Pascal, commenting on Christ's words to the man born blind (*Jn.* IX, 39), says that the Son of God "came to give sight to the blind, that is, to those who realize their blindness. And to blind those who see, that is, those who do not believe themselves to be blind. cf. *Mt.* XI, 25, and the first note to this chapter.

[2] The third state is that of the indifferent unbelievers, who "profess to follow reason," but are entirely unreasonable (*194*, *226*, *257*).

[3] He who has only another week to live will not find it best to believe that all this is merely chance" (*694*).

[4] Appendix IV,

Since we are finite beings we cannot know the nature of the infinite. But, observes Pascal, I have already shown that we may know the existence of a thing without being acquainted with its nature. "Thus it is not difficult to know that there is a God without knowing *what* He is. . . Through faith we know of His existence; through the glorified life we shall know His nature." And this faith is a rational one; it is *above* reason and the things of sense, but not *against* them;[1] and we know that the attribute of reason is to submit to that which surpasses its powers.

---

[1] *229*. Here also Port Royal is very clearly indicated by a note at the beginning of Ch. VII of the *Pensées*. "Nearly all that is contained in this chapter is for the use of certain persons who, not being convinced of the proofs of religion, and still less so of the reasons given by atheists for their lack of faith, remain in a state of suspense between faith and scepticism. The author merely desires to show them through their own theories, and by the simple light of reason, that they ought to judge that it is to their advantage to believe, and that that would be the side they should take, if the choice depended on their own will. Whence it follows that at any rate while waiting till they have found sufficient light to convince themselves of the truth, they should do all they can to incline themselves to it, and disentangle themselves from all the hindrances to faith, especially passions and vain amusements."

[2] Hume, too, says that most men find no difficulty in accounting for the ordinary operations of Nature, and that it is only the unusual phenomena that can puzzle them. Thus they exclaim at a miracle without noticing that they do not know the causes of other happenings any more than they do of the "miracle", and the only difference is that they are accustomed to the others. *An enquiry concerning human understanding*, Sect. VII, pp. 57-59.

[3] *233*, first paragraph. The passage which follows is extremely difficult to interpret, and cannot be correctly understood unless we carefully distinguish the various acceptations of the word *know* according as it deals with the question *quod* or the question *quid*, with existence or nature, with knowledge through extension, or knowledge through experience, or lastly knowledge through faith.

"Let us now speak according to the light of nature. If there be a God He is infinitely incomprehensible, since having neither parts nor limits He has no relation to us."[2] Do not then blame Christians for not being able to give a reason for their belief, professing a religion for which they cannot account, and declaring it to be foolishness in the eyes of the world.[3] Moreover, if God exists, He must be incomprehensible, for if not, He would no longer be infinite, He would not be God. Thus in lacking proof, Christians must not be lacking in sense.

That is all very well, replies the unbeliever; that excuses you from offering proofs of your faith; but it does not excuse those who receive it without proofs.—Let us examine this point. I am going to prove to you that your reason obliges you to accept this belief even without proof. Let us say then: "God is, or He is not." But to which side shall we incline? *I admit that* the reason cannot decide the matter, *at any rate by the method of demonstration.*[1] Moreover, if faith depended upon such demonstration, it would be reserved for the sages, which it certainly is not. Thus there is an infinite gulf separating us. A game is being played at the extreme end of this infinite distance, in which heads or tails may turn up. Do not accuse of error those who have already chosen, for you know nothing about it, and cannot decide the matter through reason.

---

[1] "Faith well expresses what the senses do not say, but not the contrary of what they perceive. It is above, and not against" (*265*). "I do not mean you to subject your belief to me without reason, and do not aim to overcome you by tyranny. Neither do I pretend to give you a reason for all things" (*430*).

[2] *233;* XIII, 145; 436. Pascal adds: "We are then incapable of knowing what He is, or if He is. "And we are dealing here with a knowledge of God which is neither through *experience* nor through *extension*; *therefore if we take the term* knowledge *in these last two connotations* we may say that God is "unknowable" in His nature and His existence, but not *absolutely*, since he is, as Pascal says, "knowable" by *faith*, which is a true knowledge. *Credo in unum Deum*, say the Creeds; and the Vatican Council defines further, including in God's attributes *incomprehensibilem* (Denzinger, 1631).

[3] cf. *445*. "Original sin is foolishness to men, but it is admitted to be so. This doctrine must not then be reproached with want of reason, since I admit that it has no reason. But this foolishness is wiser than all the wisdom of men, *sapientius est hominibus*." *I Cor.* I, 19-25.

No, he replies, I do not blame them for having made this choice, but I blame them for having made any choice at all. The wisest course is not to wager at all.

"Yes, but you must wager; this does not depend on your will; you are embarked in the affair" (XIII, 146; 437).

This is the momentous truth, and there is none more disturbing to the consciousness of the world to-day, nor possibly indeed, to the consciousness of all ages.[2] The problem of his destiny is so propounded to man that, whatever he may do, he cannot remain in suspense about it, he cannot be neutral. Suppose that a man is drowning; if I hesitate to save him, I have decided against it. If I remain indifferent when brought face to face with truth, I decide against it, "for he who thinks that he can remain neutral is a sceptic *par excellence;* this neutrality is the very essence of the sect" (*434*). If I remain indifferent with regard to death and the hereafter, I am acting as if I had not an immortal soul;

---

[1] I have added the words in italics, but in so doing I do not think I have added anything to Pascal's thought, or distorted it in any way. Pascal is disputing the matter with the sceptic, *who admits only proofs that are demonstrable,* and he starts from this position in order to make him abandon it. Bayle saw this very clearly (*Dictionnaire:* "Pascal"). "It is as clear as day that Pascal's words to the freethinker are equivalent to saying: You maintain that by the reason you cannot say that God exists." Pascal, says Bayle, does not concede this point, but he is going to make use of it to get the freethinker to quit his position. This argument appears to me unanswerable, and I add that Pascal concedes this point all the more readily because he knows that there are many "simple people who believe without reasoning" (*284*). We may therefore, at any rate provisionally, renounce reasoning without being inhibited from arriving at faith, for all that.

[2] If there be any risk in believing that the state of the soul will be such after death, says Plato, it is a risk, which it is good to run, καλὸς γὰρ ὁ κίνδυνος (*Phædo* 114D).

I am deciding against. It is not then a voluntary choice; we must wager, and he who does not wager *for* God wagers *against* Him.[1] He who does not renounce self renounces God. There is one point settled; you have to wager one way or the other.

"Which side will you choose?" Let us consider. There are two things involved: your reason and your will on the one hand, your knowledge and your happiness on the other. Now your reason is no more incapacitated in choosing one than the other, since you needs must choose. And as to your happiness, I am proving to you that in both cases, whether you gain or lose, it is advantageous, and therefore reasonable,[2] to wager for God, for "if you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing."

Let us look a little more closely into the conditions of this bet.[3] Admitting even that there might be "an infinity of chances of which one only would be for you," you would have more reason to wager *for*, since the stake is "an infinity of an infinitely happy life," that is, an infinite of both duration and degree.[1] "But there is here an infinity of an infinitely happy life to win,[2] one chance of gain against a finite number of chances of loss, and what you stake is finite.[3] This does away with prejudice, for wherever the infinite exists and wherever there is not an infinity of chances of loss against that of gain, there is nothing to reckon, you must risk the whole" (XIII, 150; 439).

---

[1] The dictum "He who does not wager for wagers against" is only strictly true about God, or what depends directly and necessarily upon Him, such as truth, and our immortal destiny. It is to the problem of God and of our destiny that Pascal applies it here; and it is to the problem of truth that he applies it in *434*. Pascal saw very clearly the significance of the words: "*He that is not with me is against me*" (*Mt.* XII, 30) and of these also: "*He that is not against you is for you* (*Mk* IX, 39). To a person who says: *I am neither for nor against*, one should answer . . ."(*899*). The thought is unfinished, but its meaning is clear. If it be the case of a human being, one who is not against him is rather for him; but in the case of Christ, neutrality is impossible, because He alone counts, He alone is the transcendent, absolute *necessity*: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus" (*I Tim.* II, 5). Therefore he who is not for Him is against Him.

[2] Pascal *seems* to consider only the advantage for the will and for happiness of wagering that God *is*, without considering the truth, for the reason and knowledge. But that is the method of presenting the argument *ad usum infidelis*, for it is clear that for Pascal—who is thus altogether devoid of a certain form of pragmatism—the advantage can in no case take the place of the truth; it must coincide with it. If a thing is advantageous it is because it is true. Hence what he says further on: "When a man is obliged to play, he must renounce reason to retain life, rather than risk it for infinite gain, as likely to happen as the loss of nothing" (XIII, 151; 439-40). At first Pascal had written "have renounced," which makes the statement clearer.

[3] For the explanation of the various cases contemplated by Pascal, which are not very easy to follow (in consequence of the hasty editing shown in the MS. no doubt), *vide* Lachelier, pp. 179-183, and Brunschvicg, XIII, 147-150, notes.

Here is the plan:

| | *God exists* | *God does not exist* |
|---|---|---|
| *Chances of Gain* (or rather probability) | 1 | *n* |
| *Stakes* | ∞ | 1 |
| *Advantage* or mathematical hope (gain × chance) | ∞ | *n* |

That is demonstrable, for when there is the infinite to gain, and the finite to risk, the argument is of infinite force. For the finite, in presence of the *infinite*, is *nothing*. And what do you risk by taking the chance? What evil can happen to you? You will have lived uprightly; you will have renounced corrupt pleasures, but you will have gained others of inestimable value, and you will not have risked your eternal life.[4] Perhaps you will object: it is uncertain

---

[1] I think that this apparently paradoxical proposition becomes quite clear if we apply Pascal's profound intuition about the different orders of infinity, which may be stated thus:

$$\frac{1}{\infty} = \frac{\infty}{\infty^2}$$

In other words, the relation of a unit to an infinite of the first order *represents* the relation of an infinite of the first order (infinity of chances) to an infinite of the second order (infinity of infinitely happy life).

[2] That is to say, a life of happiness, multiplied by the double infinite of duration and degree.

[3] The finite goods of this life.

[4] "The aim of this argument." XIII, 154-5; 441. In connection with this Lachelier very aptly remarks: "It is undeniable that Pascal's wager, like all wagers, is an interested act; but we must also recognize first of all, that the interest attaching to it is not of a sensuous order, and then, that the practical affirmation of which it consists is nothing less than the practice of all the virtues." (*Notes sur le pari de Pascal.* pp. 186-7.)

whether I shall win, and it is certain that I am taking a risk. But every gambler stakes a certainty to gain an uncertainty, and it is not unreasonable to act thus. All men do so; all are working for an uncertainty, as long as they do not know the reason for it; it is thus with sea voyages, commerce, battles.[1] If we did not work for an uncertainty, we should do nothing at all. Religion is not certain, you say. I agree with you. But there is more certainty in religion than in the knowledge that to-morrow will dawn for us; nevertheless we are all working as if to-morrow were a certainty, and this is sensible, and what we ought to do, according to the rule of chances that has been demonstrated. Now if it is not a sin against reason to risk the finite with certainty to gain the uncertain finite, ought we not to risk the finite with certainty when the stake is infinity?

There is only one objection that would be valid, and that is, if there were no chance of the existence of the infinite, for in such a case a myth multiplied to infinity would still only equal zero, and the wager would be absurd. Pascal does not even propound this objection, and why not? Because, *at the point that his demonstration has reached*,[2] the unbeliever cannot deny that there is at least one chance that the Infinite *exists*, in order that our heart's need, the yearn-of our soul and our intellectual ideal may all respond to a reality. "The most profound problem in philosophy," says

---

[1] Pascal frequently returns to this idea, to which he attaches great importance. *Vide* XIII, 152; 440, *324* end; *234*. This last fragment, which I make special use of here, is very important. "St. Augustine saw that we labour for an uncertainty, at sea, in a battle, etc.; but he did not see the doctrine of chances which demonstrates that we must do so." To the instances that Pascal gives, we might to-day add the example of *insurance*, which relies on this same calculation of risks. We pay—certainly—a pledge, or premium, of moderate value, in order to safeguard—hypothetically—a fortune.

[2] Indeed if, as I think, the place of the wager is the one assigned it here, Pascal has already laid down that God is *not impossible*, if not logically, at any rate *really*. Further—and this suffices to dispose of such objections as Diderot's and Renouvier's—he has proved that if any religion be true, the Catholic faith, the inheritance and perfection of the Jewish religion, is so. There is only one case in which his argument would not be effective, and that is when the unbeliever, regarding worldly goods with eyes prejudiced by the cupidity which is their *idée fixe*, attributes to them subjectively an infinite value.

Lachelier, "is the transition from the formal absolute to the real and living Absolute, from the idea of God to God Himself. If the syllogism fails us there, let faith run the risk; let the ontological argument yield to the wager."[1]

"I confess and admit it," says the unbeliever, seriously shaken by this passionate and powerful pleading. "But still, is there no means of seeing the game that is being played?" Yes, there is Scripture, and much besides; all the proofs. "Granted, but my hands are tied and my mouth is gagged. I am obliged to wager, and am not free. No one releases me, and I am so constituted that I cannot believe. What then would you have me do?" And Pascal replies in a calm, assured tone, for from this moment the cause is won: "True. But at least try to understand your incapacity to believe, since your reason leads you to belief and yet you cannot believe. Labour then to convince yourself, not by adding argument to argument on the proofs of God, but by lessening your passionate pride, for that is the great obstacle. *Wager then, without understanding what you are wagering on; but after you have staked you will understand why you cannot understand; and you will only understand that on condition that you have first made your wager.*" Such is the "reason" for this "effect," namely, that every man wagers.[2]

To understand means submission to the truth,[3] and this presupposes a moral inclination to submit to truth, whatever it may be.

---

[1] *Notes sur le pari de Pascal*, p. 199. Commenting on this admirable dictum of Lachelier's, Boutroux writes: "All philosophy that does not end in religion remains abstract and formal, either a mere aspiration or an unreasonable intellectual demand. It is in God and in God alone that existence, movement, life is to be found in its reality and fulness. We can only cease to desire our own will if God condescends to will in us." (*Revue de métaphysique*, Jan. 1921, pp. 18-19.)

[2] This interpretation seems to me to give the clue to the wager. I take it from the fragment *234*, compared with the fragments relating to submission, use of reason (*249*, *250*, *268-71*) and the very characteristic conclusion of *233*. cf. also the fragments on "removing obstacles" and on "the machine" (*246*, *247*).

[3] This remark applies to all truth, but more particularly to religious truth, which is practical rather than speculative.

"You want to arrive at faith," continues Pascal,[1] "but you do not know the way. . . Learn of those who have been bound as you are, but who now stake all that they possess. . . Follow the way by which they began; by acting as if they believed, taking holy water, having masses said, etc. That will naturally bring you to believe, and will brutalize you.—But that is just what I am afraid of.—Why? what have you to lose? . . . That will lessen your passions, which are your great obstacles."

*That will brutalize you.* This expression shocked and scandalised Port Royal, who did not venture to reproduce it; Victor Cousin likewise, who published it with abhorrence; and many others, who often ask nothing better than to be shocked. Yet how just and profound and true it is in its very emphasis! "He who would play the angel plays the brute," says Pascal (*358*). He who would exalt himself above the human state finally becomes brutalized, because pride refusing to submit to God, and pretending to a conscious possession of divinity in this life, deprives us of God, and reduces us to the level of the animals. On the other hand, he who becomes brutalized, who bends the machine, and makes the automaton work voluntarily, *in order that* "the external may be associated with the internal to obtain from God" (*250*) obtains indeed from God the grace which raises him to Himself, for God does not grant His grace to the proud man who resists Him, and aspires to do without Him, though He never refuses it to him who asks humbly for it, and submits to Him.[2] Fall on your knees, says Pascal; pray, even with the lips; do not refuse to submit to these forms (*249*, *250*). Thus you will renounce your own self; you will renounce your own will which, attaching you to self, detaches you from God; you will bow down that spiritual pride of yours which would comprehend all things and at once; you will lessen the passions which blind you, or which engage your attention so that you only half perceive all the rest, and which, by enormously exaggerating the value of the finite possessions that satisfy them, make you doubt the truth which contradicts them and can only be established when they have been overthrown.[1]

---

[1] XIII, 153-4; 441. Note the expression: "You want." This it is that dominates the wager, or at any rate the second step of the wager, which consists once the *will* has been set to work, in obtaining a *humble* attitude, through the "humiliations" essential to "inspirations" (*245*).

[2] "God resisteth the proud, but to the humble he giveth grace." *Jas*, IV, 6; *I Pet.* V, 5.

The discipline that "brutalizes" man, that of the army, for instance,[2] is necessary for his education. It teaches him not to do what he wants to do, and to do what he does not want to do. The life at the front was a "brutalizing" process, but it taught us more than all the books on philosophy.

Look at those men; they are grumbling, but yet they are marching on. Why are they going to their death, at a given signal? Do not ask them the reason for they do not know it. They will tell you the motives of which they are clearly conscious, but they will not reveal the underlying idea that actuates them. See that crowd of people praying yonder. The metaphysicians' reasonings and the politicians' calculations are of little account beside that instinct of prayer, which is as irresistible as a force of nature. They cannot avail against it; can a twig arrest the ocean's flow? They can do very little for it; the machine and the heart are more effective than argument. In the unthinking masses the heart and the machine take the place of argument. They surpass it in those who think out their belief. And both the unreasoning and the thinkers must recognize the existence of this great fact; they must renounce their own powers if they are to see.

Submission and obedience; there is the whole of discipline. *The wager is the discipline of faith; it leads to it through humility.*

---

[1] *Discours sur les preuves des Livres de Moyse* 1715. Filleau de la Chaise's acute analysis is an echo of Pascal. In this passage he cites a person so preoccupied with his passion (the fear of death) that on being asked whether he would not *stake* his life on the certainty of a city called Rome, *however little was to be gained by it*, he replied frankly No.

[2] cf. Pascal's remarks on the obedience and perpetual servitude of the soldier's life, which he compares with monastic discipline, embodied in its strictest form, the Carthusian (*539*).

Had I the necessary time at my command, it would be interesting to show here how Pascal forestalled the discoveries of modern psychology, and outstripped them.

We are acquainted with the peripheral theory of emotion. According to William James and Lange, we do not weep because we are sad, but we are sad because we weep. Emotion is only the counterstroke, in the central consciousness, to organic movements and modifications. There is some truth in this theory, but on two points it fails, and on these two points Pascal outstrips and completes it.

1. In Pascal, the movements that induce feeling, or faith, are set in motion by the *will*, *in order to* attain to faith.

2. And thus, the will *induces* faith, but does not *create* it. Neither movements nor will constitute faith; they merely dispose us to it.

This is quite clear, if we study the wager closely, and if we bring to bear upon it what Pascal has written about belief (Section V).

It is the will that bends the machine; it is the will that disposes and arrests the mind to look at the side it favours, and makes it find reasons for justifying its choice;[1] and again it is the will that makes us wager and choose, because we want to believe. And, after we have wagered, the proofs are absolutely certain, or at any rate we perceive them to be certain, if we are men of good will;[2] "there is nothing more to wager."[1] At each step that you take along this road, says Pascal to the unbeliever, you will find such a certainty of gain and such nothingness in what you risk that in the end you will realize that you have been betting on an infinite certainty, for which you have given nothing (XIII, 155; 441-2).

---

[1] "The will is one of the principal organs of belief; *not that it forms belief*, but because things are true or false according to the side from which we regard them. The will, pleased with one rather than the other, turns the mind from considering the qualities it does not care to see, and thus the intellect, moving with the will, stays to regard the side which it prefers, and thus judges by what it sees" (*99*). "M de Roannez used to say: 'Reasons occur to me afterwards, but at first a thing pleases or shocks me without my knowing the reason, and yet it shocks me for the reason which I only discover later.' But I believe, not that he was shocked for the reasons he discovered afterwards, but that those reasons were only discovered because the thing shocked him" (*276*).

[2] In the moral order there are not in fact proofs so absolute that they necessarily impose themselves on man's mind without making demands on his good will. And the reason for this is a profound one: "God will dispose the will rather than the mind. Perfect clarity would help the mind and be harmful to the will. Pride must be abased" (*581*). Knowledge without charity puffeth up" (*I Cor.* VIII, 1).

The wager then disposes man to faith, and it bears him thither, his will and his reason, his automatic existence and his mind, for we partake of both, and both must be made to believe, the mind through reason, and the automatic part of us through habit (*252*). Then the way is cleared for the reasons of the heart, reasons founded on facts and not on man-made premisses, reasons that afford the *heart* complete and absolute evidence, of which it makes the synthesis, as well as affording evidence for the *intellect*, which they convince more fully than any demonstration.[2]

Then finally, when man has done all his part, God will do the rest (*248*). He will put into man's *heart* the faith which is a gift of God, which elevates us to the *order of charity*, and unites us with the Author of our being.

> The God of the Christians is not a God who is merely the creator of geometrical truths and the order of elements, like the god of the pagans and the Epicureans. Nor is He merely a God who providentially disposes of men's lives and fortunes, to crown His worshippers with length of happy days. This was the Jewish conception of Him. But the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of the Christians, is a God of love and consolation, a God who fills both the souls and hearts of His own, a

---

[1] Filleau de la Chaise, *Qu'il y a des démonstrations* (ed. 1715, p. 352-3). This is a very significant passage, on account of the application of the wager, on the one hand to the calculation of probabilities (which is the chance that a certain combination may result), on the other hand to facts (such as the existence of Rome, the Fire of London). In the first case we have to decide correctly what there is to bet upon; in the last there is nothing to wager; the thing exists either certainly, or not at all.

[2] *289*, *290* (Proofs of religion). cf. *430* (XIII, 336-7; 525-6). Filleau, *Discours sur les Penséés* (XII, ccxvi), *Discours sur les preuves des Livres de Moyse* (ed. 1715, pp. 311-2).

God who makes them sensible of their inner wretchedness and of His infinite mercy; who unites Himself with their inmost being, filling them with humility and joy, confidence and love, and rendering them unable to find their end save in Him (*556;* XIV, 5; 581).

This is the supreme and infinite good that is gained by the man who makes his wager, submits, and believes. Had the wager been nothing but a calculation of probabilities or a merely mechanical belief, Pascal would not have penned the touching lines with which it terminates, lines which throw light upon its whole meaning:

> "If my words please you and my argument appears forcible, know that they are the effort of a man who has thrown himself on his knees both before and after to pray the Infinite and Indivisible Being to whom he submits his own soul that He would subdue yours also, for your own good and for His glory, that thus strength may be granted to weakness."

# IX

## THE HEART AND THE ORDER OF CHARITY

## CONCLUSIONS

It has been rightly said of Pascal that he is "one of the spiritual summits of humanity."[1] It is well that there should be these peaks to surmount the ordinary level, and entice man to surpass himself, that he may come nearer to truth. Step by step we have ascended this lofty summit, and now we are near the end of our endeavour; those who have been willing to follow Pascal thus far will reap their reward, for they will see the order of charity resplendent in the joy of a rehabilitated human nature. Thus, after having trodden a weary way over sterile slopes, and having crossed many valleys and escarpments without seeing anything, all at once we recognize, by the broadening of the horizon as well as by the purity of the air, that we have attained the summit.

All joy must be earned, and this joy is no exception to the rule. The fulness of joy is to be estimated by the intensity of the effort made to deserve it. The more prolonged and painful the effort, the more valuable is the prize, but he who does not make the required effort will never know the joy of conquest. Those who are not willing to go forward for a long time without seeing will never reach the point whence all that the human eye can see is visible; if they expect to understand, and all at once, they will never understand anything. Before reaching the light, and in order to be able to reach it, they must traverse "the dark night of the soul." Whosoever refuses to submit to this necessary discipline may tell himself that the light is not for him.

Such is precisely the profound significance of the wager.

[1] XII, cii. But Brunschvicg greatly exaggerates the solitude of this summit.

To comprehend, submission is necessary; and to perceive the truth, we must accept discipline and place ourselves in the attitude demanded by truth. And this attitude, this discipline, can be summed up in one word—humility.

The principle laid down by Pascal is incisive in the accuracy of its judgment, and this is immediately perceived, even upon superficial examination. But it is true and accurate in more than one respect, and its entire profundity is not revealed save to those who reflect upon it.

1. If we rivet our attention upon the surface, without penetrating to the very core of the matter, if we consider the psychological value of the principle without trying to bring into relief its ontological value, we first of all discover this. Psychologically, our ideas, like our feelings, are to some extent but the reaction of the attitude we adopt; they are its interpretation in the intellectual and moral realm. He who lives in an atmosphere of melancholy dallies with melancholy, and then actually experiences it; the artizan who lives the life of the factory, repeating and practising day after day what is said and done around him, soon acquires the mentality of the factory. This is a truism thoroughly understood by Marxians! If you would change the artizan's mentality, preach him no homilies, but first of all change the atmosphere and the surroundings in which he lives, change his way of living, his attitude and his acts. Why so? Pascal comprehended this perfectly. "We must make no mistake about ourselves. We are matter as well as mind. . . How few are the things that are demonstrated! Proofs convince the mind only; and custom affords us our most effective and our sternest proofs, for custom inclines the automatic part of us, and that involves the mind without its thinking about the matter . . ." (*252*). And it is by virtue of this fundamental law of nature that Pascal tells us: If you would believe, act[1] as if you did believe, take holy water,

---

[1] *Behave*, as the modern theorists of "behaviourism" would say, though these generally stop short at the external mechanism without discerning its significance as an instrument.

fall on your knees, "for thus through external habits one grows accustomed to the interior virtues" (*784*).

2. But with Pascal such a principle assumes yet more profound significance. This mechanical side of our human nature, of which he has given us an inkling and which we have verified for ourselves, is but an instrument, the exact scope of which he estimates. He makes use of it consciously and with a direct effort of will in order to arrive at an end he judges good and desirable. It is *with a view to dispose myself to faith* that I ought to act thus.[1] Let us note this fact. Neither the attitude, nor the effort which utilizes it, constitutes faith, but both prepare us for it; they place us in the necessary disposition to receive it. Here the psychological theory assumes a moral and an ontological significance. This truth to which we would attain, the Truth itself, is only revealed to those who make an act of humility, and that *because it surpasses us*.[2] This is what Pascal recognized, and in this he is superior to all others.

To Kant, and to German idealism in general, truth is only an intellectual concept, around which all things gravitate. Apart from phenomena, known through an experience which is itself regulated by our concepts, reason can attain only to "objects as ideas," about which it cannot decide whether they *really* exist outside ourselves. At bottom this is equivalent to saying that we are incapable of getting outside ourselves, since all knowledge comes to us through concepts, and we cannot get away from ourselves by means of a concept. It implies, too, that reason can only know the things it has put into the mind itself, or, to be more exact, truths which it produces according to its own rules, like mathematical truths. From this position to the conclusion that the mind creates truth, that it constructs the mind and God Himself, or at any rate that it coincides with Creative

---

[1] "We must *open* our mind to proofs, and confirm it in them [Pascal had at first written 'dispose it to them'] by custom, but *offer* ourselves through humiliation to inspiration" (*245*).

[2] The last step taken by reason is the recognition that there is an infinite number of things that surpass it (*267*).

Thought, was but a step which remained to be taken by this arrogant philosophy, and was in fact taken by Fichte. The German idealism is a doctrine that puts man in the place of God.[1]

Descartes' view is both much humbler and much better suited to our mental scope. In truth he recognizes God's handiwork; he realizes that it is essential for man to submit himself to the infinite.[2] But according to him reason, even while giving place to the unfathomable designs of God, is to some extent on a level with the truth which is God's creation: it can, and it should, reconstruct it through mere deduction or synthesis, starting from some simple principles, that is, (and here Descartes entirely dissociates himself from idealism) after it has observed the *principles established by God* in nature as in our souls, the initial "fillip" that He has given to the universe, as well as the *means chosen by God* to effect order. And this is why Descartes finds no difficulty in recognizing that causes ought to be proved by their effects, but this, too, is why we find that he is much less anxious to *prove* causes *by their effects*, or by experience, than to *explain* the effects *by their causes*, or by theories.[3]

As for Pascal, he goes much further than Descartes in the way of rational submission, because as opposed to Descartes he is more concerned to establish and prove facts than to deduce them. There are two reasons which necessitate this attitude of his.

Firstly and above all, Pascal desires to make his foundations sure. It is of importance to him to find indisputable facts upon which to establish his certainty, instead of being at the mercy of a reason that can be so easily imposed upon.[1] He is distrustful of artificial structures, the apparent symmetry of which can only be obtained by means of false windows, the rule for which "is not to speak correctly, but to make correct images" (*27*). He is even suspicious of the perfect order that obtains in mathematics, for "it is useless in its depth." No human science can maintain order (*61*). And we have enough to do, to know the world as it is, without trying to reconstruct it. It is the real that is the measure of the possible, and not the other way round.

---

[1] It is this, in fact, which essentially constituted the revolution effected by Kant, probably in 1769, at the time when Kant differed from Newton by proclaiming that space, instead of being the *sensorium of God*, was an *a priori* form of *our* sensibility. All this criticism started from that position, and it, too, has given rise to all the modern idealism which vainly endeavours, starting from that point, to recapture reality, that is, to deduce or to construct it. "To-day, gentlemen, we are going to construct God" said the German professor Ed. Zeller to his Heidelberg audience in 1869, according to Boutroux. It is then quite correct to say with Bergson (*Creative Evolution*. p. 357) that human intellect with its unifying function is the *formal God* of Kant.

[2] "I have never treated of the Infinite except to submit myself to it." (Letter to Mersenne, Jan. 28, 1641.)

[3] Upon this subject, consult the author's *Descartes*, pp. 141, 146, 315.

Moreover, while facts and histories furnish us with proofs the principles of which are infallible, all our explanations are naturally and of necessity very limited. All things indeed surpass our powers. All things have their being between the two infinites which escape us, so that we cannot grasp the whole of anything, and are incapable of knowing either its beginning or its end[2] and since all things are interdependent, as all are at once causing and caused, it is impossible for us, to know the parts, not knowing the whole; we cannot grasp in its entirety anything at all. Nature infinitely surpasses us and even man surpasses man. In such conditions, what are we to do? Deny the truth, as the sceptics would? Most certainly not, for the feebleness and contradictions in human beings can prove *nothing* against truth or against justice. But we must realize that "it is not by our capacity for conceiving things that we ought to judge of their truth" (IX, 260; 178). We must get rid of our conceptions, and this is why this great reasoner takes such delight in curbing the reason. We must submit to reality; we must yield to the facts. Not that truth and justice are to be found *in* the facts; but in the facts we find that *from which* we can conclude truth and justice. This, however, is on one condition, that we submit our reason first of all. Later, and then only, shall we comprehend why we had to submit without comprehension, because, but for that, we should not have understood.

---

[1] "Let them esteem themselves fortunate that in a thing that touches them so nearly, instead of being at the mercy of that feeble reason which is so easily deluded, they have but to examine facts and histories for their proofs, that is, matters for which they have infallible principles." (Filleau de la Chaise, XII, ccxvi.)

[2] "The end of things and their beginnings are hidden from him in a baffling impenetrable secrecy" (*72*; XII, 78; 350). This secrecy, as Ravaisson remarks, does not arise from their obscurity: "but the pure light is too strong for our weak sight and dazzles it." cf. XII, 83, 353; "Too much light is dazzling."

In this way Pascal gave modern science its true foundation. Mathematical science is but submission to the infinite; physical science is only submission to well-carried-out experiments, and to the laws which express the profound reality forming the basis of the external reality of phenomena. The science of ethics, and again, of history are but submission to well-established facts, even when these are incomprehensible, and to the higher reality they reveal. "The last step taken by the reason is the recognition of the infinity of things surpassing its powers; it is but feeble unless it realizes this fact. And if the things of Nature surpass its powers, what about the supernatural things?" (*267*). These most certainly are contrary neither to sense nor to reason, but they surpass both sense and reason in a veritably infinite way,[1] for, face to face with the Infinite, "the finite melts away and becomes pure nothingness, and it is thus with our minds in God's presence" (*233*).

Supernatural things thus demand a much more complete mental submission than natural things. In physics, when the mind has submitted to the facts, it comprehends at least something of the proximate causes of the fact. In religion, after it has submitted to the facts from which the existence of God and the truth of Christianity can be concluded with certainty, it *comprehends* and *perceives*, properly speaking, one thing only—namely, the reason why we can neither comprehend nor perceive fully. But the very essence of all human knowledge bearing upon reality, the extreme limit attained by great souls who have traversed all human fields of knowledge, is not this "a learned ignorance conscious of itself" (*327*)? If this be true of all reality, must it not be all the more true of infinite reality? The infinite can never be the subject of a concept. There is but one thing that we can apprehend about it directly, that is, that from its very nature it is incomprehensible to us, and that its recognition demands the total submission of our being. Submission of the intellect, because the Infinite infinitely surpasses us; submission of the soul, the will, the whole moral being, because the Infinite obliges us to submit.

---

[1] Eighteenth *Provinciale* (VII, 49-51): "Whence then do we apprehend the truth about facts? From the eyes, the lawful judges of them, as the reason is for natural and intelligible matters, and faith for what is supernatural and revealed. . . And since God has willed to make the senses the intermediary to lead to faith, so far from faith nullifying the certainty of the senses, it would on the contrary be destroying faith to desire to contradict the faithful evidence of the senses . . . God's Word being infallible in the facts themselves." Nevertheless it is true that of supernatural things "we judge neither by the senses nor by reason." cf. *273*, *430*.

We cannot deal with the Infinite as with mathematical or physical laws. The latter fetter our intellect only, and they fetter it all the more easily because they bear upon matter that is conceptual or still quite abstract, and, as a consequence, comparatively simple. And they compel the assent of the will all the more easily because they finally leave it indifferent, for if they involved moral consequences, the most securely established mathematical truths would not fail to excite prejudice.[1] Now the Infinite imposes itself not merely on the intellect, but also on the will. The truth of the existence of God involves serious moral consequences; it restrains the unruly passions and the perverse inclinations of men; it even thwarts the fancies of a more reasonable nature. It is a hard matter to recognize God, for once we have recognized Him we must obey Him; we must take ourselves in hand, renounce our own will and be prepared for self-sacrifice.

Thus, if submission is, in all matters, the right use of reason, it is here pre-eminently the right attitude for the reason, and the attitude "which is consistent with true Christianity" (*269*). The Infinite has no hold upon the proud man, satisfied in his pride; it is labour lost to try to show it to him, for he will always evade you. You may say to him: I am going to show you a new and marvellous world, but it is on one condition; you must look through this telescope; you must learn how to use it, and so on.—No, says he. I want to look at it by myself, and at once. I am not going to submit to a task that is unworthy of me, or lower myself to look through that tube of yours.—Then, my friend, there's nothing to be done; you will never see it. Thus in order that you may believe in God, you demand that He shall manifest Himself to you without any concealment, and that you have to take but one step to reach Him. But in such a case, what becomes of your liberty, the condition of all personal merit and worth? There are no proofs to compel belief. In lieu of them you demand convincing proofs, but if they are shown to you, you refuse to make the necessary effort in order to be convinced; you do not even consider them. "A miracle," you say, "would strengthen my faith. If I had seen a miracle I should be converted" (*263*, *470*). A man says this when he does not see one, says Pascal very truly; yet he would not take a single step to go and see one, and if it occurred under his very eyes, he would deny it on the pretext that there is no rule without exceptions, or something of that sort (*263*), and he would hasten to do what Pilate did in presence of the truth—turn his back on it.[1]

---

[1] In his *New Essays on the Human Understanding* (I, ch. ii, 12) Leibniz very truly remarks: "If geometry were as much opposed to our passions and present interests as ethics, we should contest it scarcely less, despite all the demonstrations of Euclid and Archimedes, which would be regarded as idle dreams, and believed to be full of fallacies."

---

[1] "Jesus answered, For this cause came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he said this, he went out again to the Jews . . " (*Jn* XVIII, 37, 38). May I be permitted to quote, apropos of this, a curious fact reported to me by a well-known doctor? The latter said to one of his colleagues: You are anxious to see some miracles? Then go to Lourdes, and you will see some very extraordinary facts. It is no use my putting myself out to do that, replied the other, for they cannot possibly be miraculous facts. Thus, when he said, Show me a miracle and I shall believe, it was a mere pretence. He said it as he might have said, Catch me the moon with your teeth, and had he been shown anything like a miracle, he would have acted exactly as Pilate acted when confronted with truth.

Indeed this God is a God who hides Himself;[1] those who would know Him must seek Him. "Seek, and ye shall find," says the Scripture (Matt. vii, 7). But "we are never told that those who seek for daylight at midday, or for water in the sea, will find it; hence the evidence of God's existence cannot be of such a nature" (*242*). It is, says Pascal, the same thing with all the proofs of our religion, without excepting even the prophecies and the miracles; of none of them can we say that they are absolutely convincing. "There is light and there is darkness, to enlighten some and to blind others." There is sufficient evidence to condemn those who shun it, for it is materiality and not reason, that makes them shun it; there is not enough of it to convince, for it is grace, and not reason, that makes them follow it (*546*). Thus the truth of God's existence has in it enough of obscurity to remain hidden from those who tempt God by the hardness of their hearts;[2] but it is clear enough to be discovered by those who sincerely seek it with all their hearts.

"Let those who believe that man's good is in the flesh, and his evil in what turns him away from the pleasures of sense wallow in them and die in their sins. But let those who seek God with their whole heart, and whose unhappiness consists in being deprived of the sight of Him, whose sole desire is to possess Him, and who have no foes but those who would turn them from Him. . . take comfort, for to them I announce joyous tidings. There is a Redeemer for them, I will show Him to them; I will demonstrate that there is a God for them; I will not show Him to the others" (*692*).

It is to these, and not to the others, that the wager and the proofs are submitted. To the man who seeks, who is anxious for the truth, hopes that it exists, and thirsts after spiritual things, and who, like the blind man of Jericho, cries "Lord, that I may see,"[3] Pascal says: Come. I will show you the way. Christ came to tell men that they have no foes but those within them, that it is their passions and their pride that separate them from God.[1] Abase and humiliate yourselves, stake upon God's existence, fall on your knees. Learn to renounce self, and to become pure in heart. "It is only just that so pure a God should reveal Himself to those who are pure in heart" (*737*). After that, your eyes will be opened.

---

[1] *Vere tu es Deus absconditus* (*Is.* XLV, 15; *242*).
[2] *430*; XIII, 336-7; 526-7. *556*; XIV, 4; 526. cf. Mme Pèrier, I, 76; 20.
[3] *Lk.* XVIII, 41.

We now understand why Pascal has been so anxious to disturb man's mind and awaken him from his torpor, to make him solicitous about his destiny and desirous of finding truth. As long as man does not feel this solicitude and this desire, there is nothing to be done, but when he has experienced them, when the instincts that are in every man's inmost being have been aroused, the game, *humanly* speaking, is almost won. Does this man possess faith? Not yet, for "faith is a gift of God" (*248*, *279*). But when man does what lies in his power, God does the rest. "Thou wouldst not seek Me, didst thou not already possess Me," says Jesus to the soul; "therefore do not be disquieted" (*555*).

Pascal expressed this idea in a very noteworthy fragment, clearly dating from the last period of his life, and apparently directed against the Jansenists.[2] This fragment is all the more worthy of interest because it helps us to comprehend the depth of the belief which moved Pascal to labour for the conversion of souls.[3]

> Jesus Christ the Redeemer of all.—Yes, for He has offered, like a man who has ransomed all who care to come to him. If any die on the way, that is their misfortune; but as far as He is concerned, He offers them redemption.—That holds good in our illustration, where

---

[1] *783*; cf. *524*-*528*, and *581*, *556*; XIV, 3; 580.

[2] Jansenius did in fact maintain that Christ did not die for all men. *Vide* the text of the *Augustinus*, ed. 1652, III, iii, 20; Michaut, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-7.

[3] Boutroux (*op. cit.*, pp. 77, 160-1) remarks that the problem, which is insoluble if we imagine man and God existing side by side in space, is solved if we think of God as a person and man as a person, that between persons there are other than bodily relations, that they may unite without ceasing to be distinct, and that thus God's action admits and demands ours.

he who ransoms and he who hinders from dying are two, but not in Jesus Christ, who does both.—No, for Jesus Christ in His quality of Redeemer, is perhaps not master of all, and thus, in so far as in Him lies, He is the Redeemer of all.

When it is said that Jesus Christ did not die for all men, you take advantage of a failing in men who at once apply the exception to themselves, and this favours a state of despair; instead of turning them from the idea to favour hope. For so we accustom ourselves to the interior virtues by these external habits.[1]

[1] *781.* Jesus therefore died for all men, without exception; He offered salvation to all, without exception. And if all men are not saved, it is their misfortune, and it is their fault because, being free, they did not *want* to receive grace, and because "Christ, in His quality of Redeemer, is perhaps not master of all." It is thus, at any rate, that I understand this fragment, which is somewhat difficult to interpret. If we compare it with Pascal's previous writings on the subject of grace, and especially the first he wrote (XI, 128 *et seq.*; 137), we may, I think, define Pascal's thoughts as follows. The grace of God is a free gift, and without this gift I cannot merit eternal life; I cannot even *effectually will* my salvation. It is God, says St. Paul (*Phil.* II, 13) who works in us both to will and to do. It is He who effects in us the work of our salvation, as first and transcendent cause. But, precisely because this cause is transcendent, it does not exclude our own action, which permits us to merit. In other words, God is the beginning, the source and the cause of our very action (XI, 129), but a cause that is always transcendent and on that account permits under it an action that is our own. It is the mystery of the Infinite infallibly affecting the finite, even when leaving it entirely free. We cannot know how this cooperation of God and man is effected. All that I know is, that for this work, which in its *origin* is Divine, God demands the *concurrence* of my will; He is the first, and I the second in this. Now so far as this depends on me I must *cooperate* with God who *operates*, confident that, if I do that which depends on me, God will do the rest, for "God never refuses His grace to those who pray for it as they ought, and is never far from those who seek Him in all sincerity" (XI, 166). No doubt, observes Pascal, the asking itself comes from God's having given us the grace to ask. To preserve His pre-eminence, God gives prayer to whom He will" (*513*); and on the other hand, if "God never refuses what He is earnestly asked in prayer," He "does not always grant perseverance in prayer" (XI, 167). This is somewhat obscure, like all that deals with grace, moreover, but there is nothing essentially Jansenist in it, for it is a doctrine that has found acceptance in the Church that one grace is required for prayer and another for perseverance, and this grace, like all graces, is absolutely free. However this may be, it is clear that no one is ever damned except through his own doings; Pascal realizes this (XI, 138); and that we are free under a Master who is absolute; Pascal recognizes this fact also. Now this suffices to give its full meaning to the last paragraph, a very significant one, of the fragment *781*, which clearly assumes that man, by good use of his liberty, may dispose his mind to grace. I cannot therefore adhere to the exegesis offered by Brunschvicg (in his note to *781*), in which he is followed by Brémond

Let man hope therefore; let him do all that depends on himself, and when he is disposed to believe, and has opened his mind to admit the proofs, when he is confirmed in them by habit, and has grown accustomed through external practices to cultivate inward virtues, the greatest of which is humility, then the obstacles are removed and the way prepared for the influence of grace—that is, for the inspirations which alone can have lasting and salutary effect. It is indeed God Himself who puts faith into the heart.

"The heart has its reasons, which reason knows not, as we see in a thousand instances. . . It is the heart that is conscious of God, and not the reason. This then is faith—God sensible to the heart, not to the reason" (*277*, *278*).

Many serious errors have been made about these well-known words[1] from lack of agreement about the meaning of the terms used, a circumstance which is the origin of most of the misunderstandings and disputes between human

(*op. cit.* IV, p. 330, note), which would lead us to understand that Pascal does not differ from the Jansenists save by "the practical application of their common doctrine." Can we conceive of Pascal favouring hope in men doomed, whatever they may do to prevent it, to eternal damnation, and advising them to make a practice of habits which would be absolutely vain and ineffectual, and only serve to create in them an illusion, possibly advantageous, yet false, and not, as he understands the matter, *to dispose them to grace?* Such an interpretation proceeds, once again. from a fundamental misunderstanding of the significance of the wager, of automatism and even of faith in Pascal's writings. I cannot forget that it was he who wrote: "It is Jesus Christ alone who is universal, catholic. Even the Church does not offer the sacrifice except for the faithful, whereas Jesus Christ offered the sacrifice of the Cross for all" (*774*). (The Church indeed does not offer the sacrifice *in a special way*, except for the faithful, but that does not prevent her from offering it in a general way for the salvation of the whole world, as is stated at the *oblatio* of the chalice.) Nor can I forget either the admirable fragment *550* (fol. 104) which begins with these words: "I love all men as brothers, because they are all redeemed." This sentence *appears* to be erased in the MS,, but it is done very lightly, and with a vertical stroke. By whom was it done? We have no means of knowing, but it is certain that Pascal wrote it, and that is what a Jansenist would never have done.

[1] Towards the end of the seventeenth century they were already famous, as we see from a latter of Mme. de Sévigné to Mme de Guitaut, Oct. 29, 1692: "Rejoice, Madame, in the peace which God now causes you to feel. You have had your troubles, you have offered them as a sacrifice. *God sensible to the heart*, that is your present happy state. I never heard such an expression before, but it, too, comes from M. Pascal."

beings. Pascal has been accused of fideism, and his accusers have used a superficial interpretation of these passages to affirm that, according to him, faith is a mere matter of sentiment, that God cannot be reached by the reason and cannot, where man is concerned, be the subject of rational knowledge. Now nothing is more alien to Pascal's real thought than such an interpretation. It is quite easy to convince ourselves of this, if we will but take the trouble to get rid for a moment of our own phraseology and our own method of propounding the problem to examine the aim Pascal is pursuing, and the meaning he attaches to the words *heart*, *feeling*, *knowledge*, *reason*.

To Pascal the heart is not feeling; it participates in feeling but is not reduced to it.[1]

The heart participates in feeling through its intuitive, *immediate*,[2] spontaneous nature, and because, like feeling, "it acts in a moment, and is always ready to act." It participates in it above all because it is, as we shall see later, the organ of *love*. Now when God is in question, knowledge cannot suffice without love; "How great is the distance between knowing God and loving Him!" To know God in a purely speculative manner without loving Him, is to know Him not.[1]

---

[1] This is clearly seen from a careful examination of the very passages in which Pascal seems to identify the two. *252*: "We must therefore put our faith in feeling." Here Pascal is contrasting the feeling that "acts in a moment, and is always ready to act" with *reason* (demonstrative or discursive) which "acts slowly and with so many views, on so many principles, which it must always keep before it, that it constantly slumbers and goes astray, from not having all its principles at hand." *274*: "All our reasoning is reduced to yielding to feeling." Here feeling is differentiated from *fancy* which is like it in its spontaneous and immediate character, but is " contrary" to it, because it has not the characteristic of truth. But, says Pascal, what rule is there that will permit of our clearly distinguishing these contraries from one another?

[2] *Pensée 95* allows of our defining more precisely the quality of *immediacy* that Pascal attributes to the feeling and the heart alike. "Memory and joy are feelings, and even mathematical propositions become feelings." *Feeling*, as Pascal understands it here, bears a strong resemblance to the *immediate datum*, as understood by Bergson. At any rate Pascal, bringing his critical mind to bear upon it, remarks that this "immediate," this "natural", feeling may, like custom and instinct, have a rational, and therefore a factitious, origin, and conversely may be effaced by reason or a contrary custom. Feeling then really acts at sight, without intermediary. But this does not imply that it was so in the beginning. When God wants to inculcate divine truths in the soul, says Pascal in the *Art de persuader* (IX, 271-2; 185) He makes them penetrate the heart, and then He heals and elevates and transfigures it, but the feeling retains its quality of immediacy. This Pascal explained very clearly in *732*. After having quoted *Jer.* XXXI, 33-4, and *Joel* II, 28: *God will make Himself felt* (Pascal had at first written *known*) *by all. Your sons shall prophesy. I will put my spirit and my fear in your heart*, he adds: "It is all the same thing. To prophesy is to speak of God, not from outward proofs, but from interior and *immediate* feeling" (underlined by Pascal: fol. 221).

But the heart is something other than feeling. Pascal, rightly, is distrustful of feeling. He has explicitly banished it from the realm of natural knowledge,[2] and if he has experienced its benefits,[1] he does not fail to recognize its dangers, for there is no certain rule for differentiating feeling from fancy or from imagination, and by mistaking the one for the other we very often run the risk of going astray.

---

[1] *280*. Mme Périer, I, 76; 20. We find elsewhere in Pascal also these two acceptations of the word *connaître* (know), in the fragments *543* and *556* for instance. "And therefore," he adds, "I shall not undertake here to prove by natural reasons either the existence of God or the Trinity, or the immortality of the soul, or anything of that sort, not only because I do not feel myself sufficiently able to find in nature proofs to convince hardened atheists, but also because this knowledge without Jesus Christ is useless and barren. Though a man should be persuaded that the proportions of numbers are immaterial truths, eternal, and dependent upon a first truth in whom they subsist, and whom we call God, I should not consider him far advanced towards his salvation." Étienne Périer, who quotes this last passage (XII, cxciv; 313) makes of it the central point for the perspective of the *Apology*, relying on what he knew to be the *design* of Pascal, which was not so much to *prove* the truths of religion as to *touch* the heart and *convince* the mind, so that a man might make his life conform to the Divine pattern given us in Christ. What indeed is knowledge that does not turn to love and interpret its feeling in actions? It was in this sense that Pascal said, "The knowledge of God without Jesus Christ is useless and barren," and that, while not despising metaphysical proofs, but even respecting them (I, 75-6; 19-20), he was not content with them and would not linger over them. His thought is easily understood and justified. In effect, through mere reason we arrive at God only as the necessary, absolute and entire cause of the universe, the first truth upon which all others depend. If we would go further, in order to try and see what God is in Himself and to know definitely His plans for us, we find ourselves in the presence of a mystery impenetrable to all created beings, acting in their own strength alone. It is only supernatural revelation that can give us some slight idea of what God is in Himself, as Creator of nature and of the supernatural. It alone can draw us to Him by a love of charity and provide us with the means of attaining Him. The metaphysical God everywhere inspires respect, and even fear; He is so far removed from us that we scarcely dare to love Him. But the God of revelation, the Heavenly Father, by coming down to us through Christ, and through Christ raising us to Him, has made us children of God and brethren of Christ, the first-born and the true Son of God (*I Jn* III, 1; *Rom.* VIII, 29, 32). Introduced thus into the Divine family, we give to God in all confidence the name of God (*Rom.* VIII, 14-15), and in our quality of sons of God, we receive from Him the power to love Him with the "perfect love that casteth out fear" (*I Jn* IV, 16-18).

[2] *Art de persuader;* IX, 271-3: 185-6. In this text Pascal assimilates the heart and the feelings to the will, in conformity with all the older philosophy. "It is natural for the mind to believe, and for the will to love. . ." (*81*).

What then is the *heart*, to Pascal? Let us note first of all that Pascal, differing in this from most philosophers, did not form a technical vocabulary for his own use. If, on this account, his language is apparently lacking in precision and directness, it gains astonishingly in suppleness and vividness, and it is to this fact, possibly, that Pascal owes his superiority over all other philosophers, namely, that with him the thought is never either the prisoner or the slave of the words in which it is expressed, but always dominates them. Pascal uses ordinary language, but he is a wonderful master of it, and all its terms are to be found in his work, with the rich variety of meaning bequeathed by the ages, and with all the delicate gradations which re-establish between them the continuity interrupted by a too rigid conceptual thought. Now it is precisely in this way that Pascal uses the word *heart*. In his work, as in the language of the day, and in the Scripture, the heart denotes the most secret part of our being:[2] it is not only the instrument of feeling and of morality, but one of the instruments of knowledge, and as it were the origin of all our intellectual operations; it is, we might say, the pinnacle of feeling and reason: "The heart naturally loves the Universal Being" (*277*).

Between the heart and the reason Pascal establishes, in the *Pensées*, a distinction akin to that established by the Greeks between the νοῦς and the διάνοια, pure thought and discursive thought. What is indeed this "reason" which Pascal continually contrasts with the heart, and to which he prefers it? It is not the reason that he exalted in his fragment the *Traité du Vide*, which is created for infinity alone; it is reasoning, discourse, the faculty that takes slow, obdurate views, which would prove everything down to its very origin, which comprehends nothing of intuition (*finesse*) or feeling, because it desires to proceed in every case by demonstration (*3*), and which always runs the risk of being mistaken because it cannot do without the memory for all its operations (*369*). The heart, on the contrary, may be likened to the eyes of the mind. Like the eye, it knows its object at a glance. It is a kind of intellectual instinct, and like the instinct, it coincides with its object. And it is this from which all our discourse is suspended, because it provides us with the direct principles whence all our reasoning proceeds.

---

[1] cf. Pascal's Profession of Faith: "Certainty. Feeling. Joy. Peace" and the end of *282*, quoted below, p. 272.

[2] This is what is meant in current language by the characteristic expressions: "learn by heart," "say by heart," "engraved upon the heart," and a very large number of expressions in the Scripture, where the Hebrew word *leb* and the Greek καρδία serve to designate man's "inward parts," the seat of his whole spiritual nature, in the realm of knowledge as in that of feeling and of will, and in the natural order as in the supernatural. cf. *Rom.* V. 5. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us," and *Eph.* I, 18, "the eyes of your heart enlightened."

*Heart, instinct, principles.*[1]

This instinct, which Pascal contrasts sometimes with reason,[2] and sometimes with experience,[3] according to the matter in hand, is the aspiration towards goodness which God has put in us, and which remains with us from our former greatness. It is that idea of truth which is as invincible for scepticism as the reason's incapability of proof is for dogmatism; it is those natural principles which in good faith we cannot doubt, and which prevent the reason from talking so wildly as to end in denying everything. The heart then, in Pascal's view, is essentially the *direct apprehension, knowledge and feeling both together, of principles.*

This interpretation is confirmed by a passage from the *Pensées*, which we must quote at length, for it is decisive, and by the light of the definitions just given, it settles the question once for all.

---

[1] *281*. These three words are written underneath one another in the margin of *237*, and joined by a broken line to form a significant diagram.

[2] *Instinct. Reason.* cf. *344* and *395*.

[3] "Two things instruct man about his whole nature—instinct and experience" (*396*).

"We know truth, not by the reason alone, but also by the heart; it is in this way that we know first principles, and reasoning,[1] which has nothing to do with it, tries in vain to combat them. The sceptics, whose object it is to do this, find their labours vain. We know that we are not deceived, however incapable we may be of proving it by reason,[2] and this incapability demonstrates nothing but the feebleness of our reason; it does not prove the uncertainty of all our knowledge, as they maintain. For our knowledge of first principles, such as the existence of space, time, movement, number, [is] as certain as any knowledge that our reasoning can give us. And it is upon the knowledge gained by the heart and the instinct that reason must rely, and must base all its arguments. (The heart feels that there are three dimensions in space, and that numbers are infinite; then reason demonstrates that there are no two square numbers, one of which is the double of the other. Principles are felt, propositions are deduced, both with certainty, although in different ways).[3] It is as useless and absurd for reason to demand of the heart proofs of these first principles before it will admit them, as it would be for the heart to ask from reason a feeling of all the propositions demonstrated before accepting them. This inability, therefore, can but serve to belittle reason which would fain judge of all things; it does not combat our certainty, as if it were reason alone that could instruct us. Would to God on the contrary that we never had need of reason, but could discern all things by feeling and instinct! But Nature has refused us this boon. On the contrary, she has given us very little knowledge of this kind, and all the rest must be acquired through reasoning. This is why those to whom God has given religion by an instinctive feeling are indeed blessed, and rightly convinced. But to those who do not possess it thus, we can give it by reasoning only, waiting for God to give it them through the feeling of the heart, without which faith is but human, and unavailing for salvation" (*282*).

---

[1] Where Pascal had at first written "reason" he changed it to "reasoning".

[2] Pascal had at first written "whatever the defects of our reason," then he went back to define precisely the meaning of the word *reason*. Thus, "proving" is the affair of the reason, but it is the heart that *knows* or feels; these are the two ways of *knowing*, according to the beginning of the fragment.

[3] The bracketed passage has been added in the margin. cf. *Esprit géométrique*, IX, 246 and 255, 168 and 173.

Let us compare this thought with the one we have already quoted: "The heart has its order. . . This order mainly consists in digressions on each point to indicate the end, and keep it ever in view" (*283*). Hence we may define the heart fairly precisely by saying that it is the faculty which perceives *principles* and perceives *order*. This power is not opposed to the intellect, nor is it even different from intellect; it is its loftiest part; it discerns and it loves, and in it knowledge and feeling, far from being mutually hurtful, are mutually helpful. A man who merits our veneration almost as much as Pascal, César Franck, the author of the *Béatitudes*, in his teaching as in his judgments, followed but one rule—love.[1] *I love*, he said, or *I do not love*. Better indeed than the intellect, love, true love, imbued with intellect, the attachment of the whole being to the truth, is able to grasp this higher truth in its source and in its origin, and to relate all things to it, according to their order.

Such is the exact part which the heart plays in belief. It is by the heart that we apprehend the truths of religion, in their origin and their order. But it is necessary to define clearly what Pascal means by this. He certainly does not mean to say that faith is a mere matter of feeling, still less that, as to its objective, actual content, it is posited or created by feeling. The principles to which the heart is attached in respect of faith are *facts*, which are *without* and *above* us and serve to establish the external, superior fact of Revelation. The heart discerns, on the one hand, their significance, and on the other, their linked-up connection.[2] *The heart then*

---

[1] Vincent d'Indy, *César Franck*, pp. 215-19. (Alcan, Paris.)

[2] Filleau de la Chaise. *Discours sur les preuves des Livres de Moyse*, p. 312. "If men know anything with certainty, it is facts." Thus it is a case of making them see "that the Christian religion is inseparably connected with facts the truth of which cannot be contested in good faith." In the *Discours sur les*

*does not effect the proofs, but it grasps their significance, and effects their synthesis.* Let us briefly establish these three points.

1. The proofs of the truth of Christianity, the exposition of which was to be the central point of the *Apology* are fairly well known to us through Pascal's *Pensées* and the faithful epitome of his scheme given by both Étienne Périer and Filleau de la Chaise. All these proofs are grouped around Christ:[1] "Jesus Christ, whom the two Testaments regard, the Old as its hope, the New as its pattern, and both as their centre":[2] Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever: *heri, et hodie, ipse et in sæcula* (*Heb.* xiii, 8).

*Christ was* indeed *foretold.* Moses,[3] who actually lived, and was no impostor, whose books cannot have been falsified, is thus the guarantee of the truth of these books, which are the foundation of the Jewish religion. He is the witness of all that is reported therein touching the Law of God, miracles, and the prediction of the Messias. The Law in its entirety is but a type[4] of the truth which was to come in the Person of Christ. The prophecies[5] form a transition from the Old to the New Testament, and make each throw light on the other, because that which had been predicted came to pass.

---

*Pensées* (XII, ccxxii), he tells us how well Pascal understood the prophecies, "how he could demonstrate their significance and their connection," And again, he writes these remarkable words: "No doubt it is because these truths are eternal, because they are bound up with each other and dependent on each other; and this connection is not seen in natural and moral truths alone, but also in truths in matters of fact, which are also to some extent eternal, since, all being assigned to certain points in eternity and space, they compose one body which subsists in its entirety for God," In the fragment *684* Pascal writes: "Every author has a sense in which all contradictory passages are in agreement, or else he has no meaning at all . . . In Jesus Christ all contradictions are reconciled."

[1] For an account of Pascal's fervour and tender love for Jesus, see Ste-Beuve, *op. cit.* III, p. 451.

[2] *740.* cf. *548*: "Not only do we know God by Jesus Christ alone, but we know ourselves by Jesus Christ alone. We know life and death by Him only. Apart from Jesus Christ we know not what is our life. or our death, or God, or ourselves. Thus without the Scripture, which has Jesus Christ for its object, we know nothing, and find only obscurity and confusion in the nature of God, and in our own nature." *547*: "Jesus Christ then is the true God of mankind."

[3] XII, clxxxvi; 307. *741.*

[4] *Pensées*, Section X.

[5] *Pensées*, Section XI.

*Christ came.* He was the expected Messias. Everything proves this—the prophecies and the types of which He, in His doctrine and person, is the perfect fulfilment;[1] the witnesses to Him; the witnesses to the expectation of Him, the Jews, unimpeachable witnesses and least of all likely to favour Christians, since, having refused to recognize the Messias, they nevertheless support the books which bear witness of Him (*571*, *640*); the witnesses of His advent, apostles and disciples, the authors of the Gospel history and sureties for its truth, for had they not been, they would have been either knaves or dupes, both equally absurd hypotheses—how could they have invented and maintained the resurrection of Christ?[2] Lastly, His personality and all the circumstances of His life, His miracles and His doctrine, "the miracles testing the doctrine, and the doctrine testing the miracles."[3]

*Christ lives for ever.* He lives in His Church, so firmly established yet so quietly, although her teaching might be so contrary to human nature; the Church, whose doctrine gives the reason for all things; whose law is holy and just; and who has given birth to great and saintly souls, admirable in their humility (*289*). This Church, so often attacked by contradictory errors, has maintained against them truths which, though apparently opposed, together make up the whole truth; truths both in fact and in morals, which seem to contradict one another, truths of which the opposed heresies can retain only one or the other, such truths all subsist in admirable order in the bosom of the Church, so that her history may properly be called the history of the truth.[4] This same Church, always bitterly attacked, yet always enduring, while all else crumbles into decay, has maintained her position in spite of persecutions,[5] without either flinching, or yielding to the will of tyrants. God has preserved her a thousand times by extraordinary manifestations of His power when she has been on the eve of universal overthrow; adoring Him who has ever been adored, she has subsisted uninterruptedly, has always been before the world either in symbol or in fact, and alone and unchanging and without violent measures has endured unshaken, upheld solely by the force of truth.[1] In this we have something "wonderful, incomparable, and wholly divine."

---

[1] XII, ccxxxvii, clxxvii; 308. *684*; section XII.

[2] *800*, *801*, *802:* XII, ccxxix, *et seq.*

[3] *803*. For miracles in particular, *Pensées*, Section XIII.

[4] *858*. *862*, whence the preceding is taken, is explained in Appendix II.

[5] "There is pleasure in being a vessel beaten about by a storm, provided we are certain it will not founder. The persecutions that harass the Church are of such a nature."

Such are, in miniature, the proofs of Christianity according to Pascal, those destined to form the central point of his *Apology*. Let us note in passing that at this time, that is, before the advent of Spinoza and Richard Simon, and long before the discoveries of our own age—at a period when, history being always regarded as its basis, religion was proved from the inspired Scripture instead of proving it from Scripture, in so far as it is historical—to propound the religious problem in the terms in which Pascal propounded it, to take, as he did, religion as a *fact* and apply the historical method to it to find its supernatural claims, was a "stroke of genius."[2] And this part of Pascal's work, far from being, as some have maintained, the weakest part, is in the eyes of the most competent judges,[3] possibly "his finest thought and his best writing." It would be a simple matter to adjust these brief notes of his to present-day criticism and bring out the decisive force of Pascal's argumentation. Notably in all that concerns the Messianic prophecies, which formed as it were, the keystone of his *Apology*,[4] he has "caught a glimpse of, and seen, and proclaimed, the true solution," writes Père Lagrange, and it is astonishing that at a time when exegesis was not yet in existence, Pascal, by the mere force and penetration of his genius, had forestalled and, in some respects, outstripped the results upon which our science prides itself.

---

[1] *613*, end, and *646*, *878*, *710*, *619*.

[2] G. Lanson, "Pascal," in the *Grande Encyclopédie*, 29 b. It is true that the author adds: "I am not sure whether it was not an imprudence in a Catholic." To this Pascal would no doubt have replied, that a Catholic has nothing to fear from facts. Moreover, it was not Pascal who first put pointed questions; they have always been put to the Church. The saints themselves have not been afraid to follow heretics into their errors to combat them, and have never been satisfied with mere refusal to consider them.

[3] "Pascal et les prophéties messianiques," Pere Lagrange (*Revue Biblique*, Oct. 1906, pp. 534 and 550). cf. V. Giraud, *op. cit.*, p. 176 *et seq.*

[4] *547*: "For proof of Jesus Christ we have the prophecies, which are solid and palpable proofs. And these prophecies, accomplished and proved true by the event, mark the certainty of these truths, and consequently the divinity of Jesus Christ." *693:* "I find many contradictory religions, and hence all false

Now these facts with which religion is inseparably connected, especially the prophecies, miracles, and that great miracle of its perpetuity, are such that the truth cannot be assailed in good faith, provided a man takes the trouble to study it and submits his reason to it. These are "solid and palpable proofs" (*547*), "firm foundations, that nobody at all can undermine" (*619*). But in order that they may be "absolutely convincing" (*564*), the heart must grasp both their significance and their sequence.

2. Each of these facts must be felt by the heart, for without that, all will remain obscure.[1] If the proofs be interpreted by the "concupiscent mind," they do not reveal God, they conceal Him from view. As Pascal loved to say, Holy Scripture is not a science of the mind, but of the heart; it is intelligible only to the upright in heart, and all others will find but obscurity therein.[2] It is the same with *types*. As long as we do not possess the secret, we see nothing, but "once having penetrated the secret, it is impossible not to see it" (*680*). Now what is to reveal the secret? It is the heart. So too, every prophecy has a twofold meaning[3]—the literal or carnal meaning, and the spiritual or true meaning. Now the true meaning, the one which proves, and is no doubt only the literal meaning considered "in its religious aspect," can only be grasped by the heart, that is,

---

save one. Each wishes to be believed on its own authority, and menaces the unbelievers, but I do not on that account believe them. Everyone can say as much, and everyone can call himself a prophet. But I find the Christian religion realising the prophecies, and that is what everyone cannot do." cf. XII, ccxxii *et seq.* and *706*.

[1] *Pensées*, Section VIII.

[2] These are the expressions used by Mme Périer, I. 70; 16.

[3] *642:* "Proof of the Old and the New Testament together" Filleau, XII, ccxxii. cf. Lagrange, *loc. cit.*, p. 541 *et seq.*

by "a certain realization of what God is to us, and what we ought to be towards Him."[1] Thus, observes Pascal, prophecy clearly predicts the *time:* the understanding of the promised time[2] then does not depend on the heart at all. But it predicts the *manner* in types, for it promises "good things." Now the wicked take these to be material blessings, and not seeing them come do not believe; but the good, who know that the promise of temporal blessings would be unworthy of God,[3] do not make any mistake in the matter, for "the understanding of the good things promised depends on the heart, which calls *good* that which it loves" (*758*).

We may say the same about all the other proofs, and especially the miracles, for there are false miracles which, from the material point of view, seem not to differ from the others; in order to discern which are really true, we must bring a rule to bear. This rule again is one for the heart, for it is the heart that provides us with "reasons for belief,"[4] and consequently certainty, on condition that it is open to the love of the truth. "The ground of disbelief in true miracles is want of love. The ground of belief in false miracles is want of love."[1] The miraculous fact is certainly not beyond our methods of investigation, and through these the miracle is accessible to all. But that is not enough to make it *recognized* as such by all. The fact perceptible to sense is one premiss of the argument which leads us to conclude that it is a miracle; the other premiss is provided by the "heart," or as we should say nowadays, the disposition, and this explains why the same fact is admitted to be miraculous by some minds, and not so by others. Let us consider Christ once more. "He came at the time foretold, but not with the glory that had been expected, and therefore they did not think that it could be he" (*670*). It was only the "eyes of the heart" (*793*) that could see him, and see, too, why God wished to conceal Himself. Lastly, the perpetuity of the Christian religion itself is perceptible to the heart alone, for the mind, seeing that there is an abundance of religions, concludes that Christianity is but one among many, that that which is not unique cannot be true, and so turns aside from it. But the heart recognizes that if there were not one true religion, there could not be so many false ones obtaining credence; if there had never been any true miracles, people would not so readily believe in false ones (*817*, *818*). And, going further still, the heart realizes why it was necessary that there should be so many religions, for had there been but one, God would have been manifest in it, and there would be no need of faith.[2] Thus reflecting on the fact that "the Christian religion is not the only one," the heart concludes: "Far from finding this a reason to make us believe that it is not the true one, it is the fact which, on the contrary, makes us see that it is."[3]

---

[1] These peculiarly felicitous expressions are those used by Lagrange, *loc. cit.*, pp. 541 and 559, to point out how essentially correct Pascal's point of view is.

[2] The fragment *758* is of supreme importance. We can no longer admit to-day that the prophecies manifest, at least in general, exact chronological precision, but Pascal himself admits, with respect to the seventy weeks of Daniel, a margin of two hundred years (*723*), which gives an idea of the exactitude with which his assertion may be taken, and permits us to maintain it, making this correction. Lagrange, *loc. cit.*, pp. 539-40.

[3] *659*. cf. *571*. Lagrange (*loc. cit.*, p. 543), considers this reason both admirable and conclusive.

[4] *823*. "Were there no false miracles there would be certainty. Were there no rule to test them miracles would be futile and there would be no reason for belief. Now, humanly speaking, there is no human certainty, but reason." Pascal added "humanly," the better to point out, apparently, that the certainty we may acquire is not solely of human origin, since God must enlighten the heart for us to be able to discern the rule, as the fragment *826* indicates. cf. *Mt.* XXIV, 24; *Deut.* XIII, 1-6. Thus the miracle is unquestionably essential to proving religion, but it is not sufficient. Since religion is in the highest degree moral, the reasons for belief in it need not be compulsory; the last word is spoken by the moral consciousness, which is an absolute rule only when it is *certa* and *vera.* Prudence, which governs our acts, cannot be perfect unless the entire individual is well disposed towards his final end, that is, in a state of charity; to seek is to desire good.

3. Thus it is the heart which perceives the significance of each of the proofs, and it again that forms their *synthesis*. And whence do these proofs derive their force? From their

[1] *826*. *Jn* X, 26; *II Thess*. II, 9-14.

[2] cf. *585*. and all the fragments on the *Deus absconditus*. *Is*. XLV, 15.

[3] *589*. It must not be forgotten that Pascal had already discussed the proofs of the truth of Christianity. He is only rebutting an objection here.

*convergence.*[1] Each of them, considered alone, may possibly not be absolutely conclusive, but the array of them and the fact that they are all to be found in Christianity constitute a powerful argument in favour of the truth of this religion. So great an accumulation of proofs, being assembled and contemplated in their rational concatenation, produces a certainty which, if not more complete, is at any rate more worthy of confidence and more natural than certainty derived from the speculative and abstract demonstrations of geometry. Its methods are more suited to the mind of man, and there is no one unable to find its beginnings in himself, or who, viewing them as he ought, cannot go beyond the mere probability to arrive at the infinite, that is, the certainty that it is so, and to find so much light on the subject that it is impossible to resist conviction. Now what is it that effects this accumulation, assemblage, or synthesis, so different from the combinations of numbers? What is it that perceives the concatenation of infinite, divine truths? What is sensible of the end whither all things are tending, the end and the beginning which a mere intuition, were we capable of it, would give us? The heart alone. This is the ingenious and unforeseen application of the law of probability, which was destined to re-create human logic entirely, which endowed history with its proper method and its own certainty, and prepared the way for a rational science of the unique and the individual.[1]

---

[1] This is very clearly shown by Filleau de la Chaise, in his *Discours*, pp. 313-14, and his treatise *Qu'il y des démonstrations* . . p. 351, pp. 356-7, which are quite in accordance with Pascal's views, and give us a faithful echo of his thought and of his style; all that follows has been taken from these. This truth was also very clearly comprehended by Cardinal Newman, an inheritor of Pascal's outlook in more than one respect, who, in order to explain the nature of inference by 'accumulation of probabilities,' and to show that there are 'facts which, taken separately, may perhaps be natural, but, found together, must come from a source above nature,' supports his position by this very *Pensée 289* of Pascal's, which he quotes in his *Grammar of Assent*, p. 303. Here is Pascal's original text: *Proof.* 1. The Christian religion having established itself so strongly, yet so quietly, whilst contrary to nature. 2. The sanctity, dignity, and humility of a Christian soul. 3. The marvels of Holy Scripture. 4. Jesus Christ in particular. 5. The apostles in particular. 6. Moses and the prophets in particular. 7. The Jewish people. 8. The prophecies. 9. Perpetuity: no (other) religion has perpetuity. 10. The doctrine which explains all. 11. The sanctity of this law. 12. By the course of this world. Undoubtedly after considering what life is and what religion is we should not refuse to act on the inclination to follow it, if it comes into our heart; and it is certain that there is no ground for jeering at those who follow it (*289*).

Pascal did not stop short at proclaiming the principle; he very definitely indicated its application, especially as far as the prophecies are concerned, and it would be an easy matter to extend his method to all the other proofs. If the prophecies of the Old Testament are to be conclusive, they must have been fulfilled in the New, and therefore, Pascal tells us, we must consider *at the same time* "the prophecies and their fulfilment; what has preceded and what has followed Jesus Christ."[2] And for the proof to be indeed complete, it was not enough that a man should have foretold the coming of Christ, and that Christ should have come according to his prophecy, which would already be of "infinite force" (*710*); neither was it enough that the prophecies existed; "they needed also to be distributed in all places and preserved throughout all time; and in order that this agreement should not be regarded as the result of chance, it was necessary that it should be foretold."[3] Yet more; it was necessary that the same thing should be predicted *in many different ways*, and that each should manifest *special circumstances*,[1] for this agreement, this *concert* (to use Pascal's term) absolutely excluded the element of *chance* (*707*, *694*); it could not, therefore, be the result of *human art*, for "God alone could bring about the event with so many different effects, all of which alike prove, in an unanswerable way, the religion that He came in His own person to establish among men."[2] History proves God. "How grand it is to see, by the eye of faith, Darius and Cyrus, Alexander, the Romans, Pompey and Herod, working, though unconsciously, for the glory of the Gospel!" (*701*).

---

[1] Speaking of the "agreement of so many independent testimonies, all analysed, verified, and submitted to criticism," Bergson says: "My belief has not the mathematical certainty which the demonstration of Pythagoras' theorem gives me, and it has not the physical certainty which the verification of Galileo's law brings me; but it has at least all the certainty which we can obtain in historical or judicial matters" (*Mind-Energy*, p. 81). And I may add that this certainty satisfies the reason as much as the other two.

[2] *705*. cf. *642*, *698*, Filleau, XII, ccxxxii.

[3] *707*. cf. *706*. "Such was the preparation for the birth of Jesus Christ, whose Gospel, exacting belief from all men, made it necessary not only that there should be prophecies to inspire this belief, but that these prophecies should be spread throughout the whole world, so that the whole world should embrace it." Pascal must be alluding here to what occurred after the return from exile. The Jewish synagogues then spread on all sides, so that shortly before Christ's advent, the Greco-Roman and the Eastern worlds had many synagogues in which the Law of Moses and the Prophets were read. On the other hand the Old Testament, containing the prophecies, preceded Christianity in point of time, and to-day is the possession not only of the Christians, but also of the Jews, who are witnesses not inclined to be favourable to Christ. The Dispersion had been predicted by prophets writing from three different places, Babylon, the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. (cf. *Jer*. XXV, *Is*.LXVI, 19). This last point (the *prediction* of the Dispersal) is not absolutely essential to the full force of Pascal's thesis. It is enough that the prophecies, always remaining identical, are in complete accord, despite the fact that their authors were of different places, times, and characters.

This is the order apprehended by the heart. All these truths are eternal; they are all connected, and this concatenation holds good also for truths of fact, since, being all assigned certain points in eternity and space, they compose one body subsisting in its entirety for God. Now *the heart perceives this concatenation*, *because it brings all things into relation with the one thing needful*, *as to the end whither all things are tending*.[3]

By the light thus gained, the proofs appear like "something real and positive," since they are indeed the symbols or types of reality, and what difficulties there may be now seem but "mere negations which arise out of not seeing the whole." Man has all the light that he is capable of using. To the eyes of faith everything grows clear; the Hereafter alone can perfect it.

Now this order, with its dominating principle and its resplendent end, this order to which faith introduces us and wherein the glorified life will establish us, is the *order of charity*. "All that does not tend to charity is figurative. The sole aim of the Scripture is charity. All that does not tend to that unique end is figurative" (*670*).

---

[1] *709*, *711*, *712*. Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, p. 83.

[2] *Préface de Port-Royal.* XII, clxxxvii; 308.

[3] *283*, and *670*, conclusion, should be studied for the order of the heart. "God thus varies this sole precept of charity to satisfy our curiosity which is always seeking variety, by the variety which still leads us to the one thing needful. For there is only one thing needful, and we love variety, and God satisfies both needs by these varieties which lead to the one thing needful." The sole end is charity, and all the rest is figurative; thus the Pascalian conception of *proof* is closely associated with the Pascalian doctrine of *types*.

Pascal has defined this upon a page[1] which illumines his whole work, and of which it has been said, not without reason, that it is the finest in the French language:

> The infinite distance between body and mind is a type of the infinitely more infinite distance between mind and charity, for charity is supernatural.[2]
>
> All the splendour of greatness lacks lustre for those who seek understanding.
>
> The greatness of men of understanding is invisible to kings, the rich, leaders, to all who are great according to the flesh.
>
> The greatness of wisdom which has no existence save in God, is invisible to the carnal-minded and the men of understanding. These are three orders, differing in kind.
>
> Men of exalted genius have their empire, their splendour, their greatness, their victory, their lustre, and do not need material greatness, with which they have nothing to do. They are seen, not by the outward eye, but by the mind, and that is enough for them.
>
> The saints have their empire, their splendour, their victory, their lustre, and need no worldly or intellectual

---

[1] This conception of the three orders has exercised a very distinct influence on the French thought of the nineteenth century. We find the first sketch of it in Pascal's Letter to Queen Christina, 1652 (III, 31; 112), in which Pascal distinguishes between the orders of body and of mind; and the first form of it is contained in fragment *460*, where he compares the three orders to the three concupiscences. "There are three orders of things: the flesh, the spirit, and the will. The carnal are the rich and kings, who have the body for their object. Enquirers and scientists, who have mind for their object. The wise, whose object is justice." We have moreover seen that the idea of the discontinuity of the orders is very closely bound up with Pascal's mathematical researches concerning the various orders of infinity and their heterogeneity.

[2] The expressions *type* and *infinitely more infinite*, which are connected with Pascal's most profound conceptions, should be noted here. To Voltaire, who regards this *Pensée* as "gibberish" (*Premières remarques*, XVI) Boullier replies by recalling *I Cor.* II, 14. *Animalis autem homo non percipit ea, quæ sunt Spiritus Dei.*

greatness, with which they have nothing to do, for these add nothing to them, nor do they take anything away from them. They are seen by God and the angels, and not by the bodily eye, nor by the enquiring mind; God suffices them.

Archimedes, without splendour, would have had the same reverence. He fought no battles for the eyes to gaze upon, but he left his discoveries for all minds. And how splendid he was to the mind!

Jesus Christ, without wealth or any outward scientific equipment, is in His own order of holiness. He furnished no scientific discovery, and He never reigned; but He was humble, patient, holy, holy, holy, in God's sight, terrible to devils, and sinless. Oh, in what great pomp, and with what transcendent magnificence did He come, to the eyes of the heart that can discern wisdom!

There would have been no need for Archimedes, though of princely birth, to play the prince in his books on geometry.

There would have been no need for our Lord Jesus Christ, for the purpose of shining in His kingdom of holiness, to come as a king; but He did come in the glory proper to His order.

It is most unreasonable to be offended by the lowliness of Jesus Christ, as if this lowliness were in the same order as the greatness He came to set forth. Let us consider this greatness in His life, His Passion, His obscurity and His death; in the selection of His disciples, in their desertion of Him, in His secret resurrection, and the rest; and it will seem so vast that there will be no room for offence at a lowliness which is of another order.

But there are those who can only admire worldly greatness, as if there were no intellectual greatness; and others who only admire intellectual greatness, as if there were not infinitely greater heights in wisdom.

All bodies, the firmament, the stars, the earth and its kingdoms, are not to be compared with the lowest mind,

> for mind knows all these, and itself; the bodies know nothing.
>
> All bodies together, and all minds together, and all they can effect, are not to be compared with the least motion of charity, for that is of an order infinitely more exalted.
>
> All bodies together cannot furnish one spark of thought; it is an impossibility, for thought is of another order. All bodies and minds cannot produce a single motion of true charity; it is an impossibility, for charity is of another, a supernatural order (*793*).

This then is the supernatural order envisaged by Pascal when, above the order of body and the order of mind, he rises to the order of charity. He uses this term in the Scriptural sense, wherein *grace* and *charity* appear to be inseparable, both denoting the supernatural state of the soul.[6] According to Scripture indeed, the Holy Spirit who is bestowed on us makes us the adopted sons of God, heirs of the Father, and co-heirs with Christ;[2] He spreads abroad in our hearts the love of God, or charity, and this charity effectually makes us the children of God. And thus, when God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of His Son, we have within us the Kingdom of God, like a higher power or virtue which exalts and transforms us. United to Christ by a living faith, it is no longer we who live, but Christ Who lives in us. Our passing from a state of nature to a supernatural state seems to be only a transformation, but it is an entire transformation, which raises us to Christ, with Whom we make one.

Now this Spirit, a gift of the Father's love towards us, Who in His turn makes us love the Father and diffuses His love throughout our inmost being, is just He Whom the

---

[1] Many theologians regard grace and charity as the same thing, differing only accidentally. St. Thomas Aquinas and the Thomists regard grace as the essence of the supernatural in the soul, and charity as the result of grace. In any case, grace and charity, whether or not they are identical, are at least inseparable, and, identical or not, both are supernatural. For what follows, see *Rom.* V, 5; VIII, 5; *I Jn* III, 1; *Gal.* IV, 6; II, 20; III, 28.

[2] *Rom.* VIII, 17.

Father grants to those who ask of Him:[1] "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find." To receive the gift of grace, to become children of God and raised to the supernatural state, we must fulfil certain conditions. The heart must be open to the love of the truth, and the glory sought must be that which comes from God alone. To gain the Kingdom of God and make it our own, we must be ready to sacrifice all. "If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel, shall save it."[2]

Such is the teaching of Scripture; it is upon such sustenance that Pascal's thought was nourished, and this it is that explains it.

*The greatest of the Christian truths*, says Pascal, is *the love of the truth*.[3] And indeed, truth cannot be attained except by love. While human things must be known before they can be loved, with what is Divine, love must precede knowledge. "We do not enter upon the truth save by charity," and as these Divine truths are "infinitely above nature, God alone can put them into the soul of man."[4] Truth without charity is worth nothing: "We make an idol of truth itself, for truth apart from charity is not God; it is His image and idol, which we must neither love nor worship . . . we must worship its order only.[5] We must therefore get rid of pride, and destroy it at its very source; we must deny ourselves, and love God only. Now "nothing . . . can change us, and render us capable of knowing and loving God, but the power of the foolishness of the cross, without wisdom or symbols, and not even the symbols without this power."[1] Without charity, truth can neither be known nor loved as it ought, while charity, even without the proofs, suffices; for this reason the Christian religion is suited to minds of all sorts. "What men with their highest intelligence had succeeded in discovering was taught through religion to babes" (*444*). Further, religion sends us to infancy, and teaches us: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."[2] Do not, therefore, be surprised, says Pascal, to see simple persons believing without reasoning about their belief; they "judge of it by the heart as the others judge of it by the intellect." No doubt, they may be incapable of justifying their faith or convincing an unbeliever, but they themselves are effectually persuaded of its truth, and we have proof that God Himself inclines their heart to believe and gives them His love: "He who loves Him, he whom He loves."[3] That is enough. And indeed this charity or supernatural love of God leads them to love God only and to hate self alone: *all through Him, all for Him*. It kills pride and our own will and egotism in us; it teaches us very effectively to tend to the general good, to feel that we are members of a whole, that is, "to have neither life, being, nor movement

---

[1] *Lk.* XI, 13. For the remarks that follow, see *Mt.* VII, 7; *II Thess.* II, 10; *Jn* V, 44; *Mk* VIII, 34-5.

[2] *Lk.* IX, 23, 24.

[3] *945;* XIV, 380. cf. *949.*

[4] *Art de persuader*, IX, 271-2: 185.

[5] *582.* Truth must not be separated from the "order of God"; it is not an end in itself; it is only a means of arriving at the Source of all truth, and uniting ourselves with it by love. Pascal many times returns to this idea, which is of paramount importance with him. *377*: "Discourses on humility give occasion for pride to the boastful, and for humility to the humble. . ." *499*: "The greatness of St. Teresa. That which was pleasing to God was her profound humilty under her revelations; and that which pleased men was her intelligence. And so we torment ourselves to imitate her discourses, thinking thereby to imitate her condition, rather than to love what God loves, and place ourselves in the state pleasing to God." *Letter* to a friend at Clermont, 1661 (X, 156): "We act as if it were our mission to make truth triumph, instead of which our only mission is to fight for her. The desire for conquest is so natural

---

that when it is concealed by the desire to make truth triumph, the one is often mistaken for the other, and we believe we are seeking God's glory when we are really seeking our own." Now we must "desire the order of God" alone.

[1] *587*. cf. *588*, and *I Cor.* I, 17-25; *Gal.* V, 11. It is in this sense that Pascal, in the second letter to Mlle de Roannez (V, 410; 211), and in the fragment *498*, recalls the text: "I came not to send peace, but a sword" (*Mt.* X, 34), for, he adds, "the war that seems hard to men is peace before God." It is this peace that Christ came to bring to men; "before Him the world was wrapped in false peace." Charity, by which God draws us to the realms above, cannot be established here below except by warring against the lusts of the flesh and all that drags us downwards.

[2] *271*; *Mt.* XVIII, 3. For what follows, see the fragments *284-88*, quoted at the end of Ch. V.

[3] These noteworthy words, first written in the margin by Pascal, were afterwards erased. The fragments on the "thinking members," *473-483*, and *489*, should be read here.

save by the spirit of the body, and for the body . . . *Adhaerens Deo unus spiritus est.* We love ourselves because we are members of Jesus Christ. We love Jesus Christ because He is the body of which we are members.[1] All are one, one is in the other, like the Three Persons of the Trinity" (*483*).

This is what Jesus Christ has taught men. This is what He came to establish: truth and charity.[2] He alone can give them to us. He alone, by the grace that His Redemption has won for us, the infinite source of grace, and the source of all grace in man's present state, can communicate to His creatures "the dignity of causality" (*513*), make a man into a saint (*508*), and all men into one Holy Church (*785*), thus preparing them for their life in glory, of which grace is the type and the origin or cause (*643*). In loving Jesus Christ, we love a being who, while both without and within us, is truly worthy of love, who unites us to Himself without absorbing us, raises us without constraining us, and loves us better than we love ourselves, for it is only the Universal Being who can do this: and thus, through the love of Christ, the kingdom of God is in us, since, by Him, "universal good is in us, is ourselves, and yet not ourselves."[3] But this God is at the same time a man: "by His glory He is all that is great, being God, and by His mortal nature all that is frail and abject"; and because He has taken upon Him this wretched state, "He can be in all men, and a pattern for all states" (*785*); He is nearer and more present to us than ourselves.

> *Mystery of Jesus.* Jesus suffers in His passion the torments that men inflict on Him; but in His agony He suffers the torments He inflicts on Himself. . .
>
> Jesus is alone. . .
>
> Jesus seeks companionship and consolation from men. . . But he receives none, for His disciples are asleep.

---

[1] *Eph.* I, 22. *I Cor.* XII, 27. Actually Christ is the head of the body of which we are the members.

[2] *665*. *Jn* I, 17: "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

[3] *485*; *Lk.* XVII, 20. cf. *483*.

Jesus will be in agony even to the end of the world; we must not sleep during that time. . .

Jesus being in agony and in the greatest affliction, let us pray longer. . . Console thyself, thou wouldst not seek Me hadst thou not found Me. I thought of thee in Mine agony, such drops of blood I shed for thee. . . Wouldst thou have Me always shed the blood of My humanity, and shed no tear of thy own?

Thy conversion is My affair; fear not and pray with confidence as for Me.

I am present with thee by My word in the Scriptures, by My spirit in the Church, and by inspiration, by My power in the priests, by My prayer in the faithful.

Physicians will not heal thee, for thou shalt die at the last. But it is I who heal thee and make the body immortal . . .

I am more a friend to thee than this man or that; for I have done for thee more than any of them; they would not bear what I have borne for thee, they would not die for thee in the time of thy treachery and cruelties as I have done, and as I am ready to do, and do among my elect, and in the Blessed Sacrament.

I love thee more ardently than thou hast loved thy uncleannesses. . .

And the soul replies: "Lord, I give Thee all!" and, confident in her Redeemer, lets Him work within her: "Do little things as though they were great, because of the majesty of Jesus Christ who does them in us, and who lives our life; and do great things as though they were little and easy, because of His omnipotence" (*553*).

"Thus I stretch out my arms to my Redeemer who, having been foretold for four thousand years, came to earth to suffer and die for me at the time and in all the circumstances that had been foretold, and through His grace given unto me, I await death in peace, in the hope of being eternally united with Him; yet I live my life with joy, either in the prosperity it pleases Him to give me, or in the adversity He sends me for my chastening, and which He, through His own example, has taught me to endure" (*737*).

Pascal realized this order of charity in his own life. We should read in Mme. Périer's "Life" (I, 82-114; 25-40), the sublime story of his last years of earthly existence; I know of nothing more moving. You will see this man of exalted genius humbly praying to God that he may submit his entire being to Him;[1] that he may patiently and gently accept all the ills it may please the just and merciful God to send him for the development and the perfecting of his inner life. You will see him denying himself every pleasure, renouncing all luxury, incessantly seeking to mortify the flesh, to preserve purity of life in himself and others, solicitous above all things to practise the virtues of *poverty* and *charity* in absolute simplicity, that he may be able to merit the eternal Kingdom, "where God will be all in all."[2] He was a little scrupulous about the attachment shown him by his own relatives, and in his kindliness and tenderness with regard to them manifested a very great reserve, for he thought that in clinging too closely to his fellows he would be depriving God, and that "since love could have no other end than God, it should attach itself solely to Him." To keep this principle ever in mind, he had written upon a piece of paper, which he was often seen to read: "It is not right that any should attach themselves to me, even though they are pleased to do it, and do it voluntarily. I should deceive those in whom I aroused the desire, for I am not the final end of any, nor have I that which can satisfy them.

---

[1] Mme Périer informs us that her brother was greatly attached to the Divine Office (the prayers of the breviary) and that he tried to recite it as far as he could, especially the Little Hours, which include Psalm CXVIII (according to the Vulgate), with which he was delighted. This psalm extols the law of God under the varied titles of way, precepts, testimony, statutes, ordinances, judgment, word: the law that the Psalmist seeks with his heart and keeps in his heart.

[2] This last feature is borrowed from the *Abrégé de la vie de Jésus-Christ* XI, 94.

Am I not about to die? And thus the object of their attachment will perish. Therefore, as it would be blameworthy in me to allow a falsehood to be believed, even though I should gently insinuate it, and it were believed with pleasure, and might give me pleasure, so would it be wrong of me to make myself beloved. And if I attract people to become attached to me, I ought to warn those who are ready to consent to a lie, that they must not believe it, whatever may be the advantage of it to me, and indeed they ought not to become attached to me; for they must spend their lives and their efforts in pleasing God, and seeking Him."[82] Such was the order, and Pascal's whole care was to follow it with absolute sincerity and fidelity, and it was in order that he might never depart from its injunctions that he had written down on a paper that he carried about with him, the way which God was leading him.

> [I love all men as my brothers, because all have been redeemed.] "I love poverty, because He loved it. I love wealth, because it gives the power of helping the needy. I keep faith with everybody, not rendering evil to those who wrong me; but I wish them a lot like mine, in which men are unable to give me either good or evil. I endeavour to be just, true, sincere, and loyal to all men; I have a tender heart for those to whom God has more closely bound me; and whether I am alone or in the sight of men, in all my actions I do not lose sight of God who will judge them, and to whom I have consecrated them all.
>
> Such are my sentiments, and every day of my life I bless my Redeemer who has implanted them in me and who has transformed me from a man full of weaknesses, shortcomings, concupiscence, pride, ambition, into one rid of all these evils by the power of His grace, to which all the

---

[82] Quoted by Mme Périer, I, 96; 31. The MS. gives only a copy of this transcript, apparently in Domat's handwriting, with this note: "M. Périer has the original of this." It is no doubt to Domat that Mme Périer alludes when she speaks of "one of the most spiritually-minded and pious people, with whom her brother had frequently conversed about the practice of virtue."

glory is due, since of myself I am ever frail and sinful."[1]

He was yet, however, to encounter one final test, which added to his physical sufferings the torments of the soul, a test which, while revealing Pascal's scrupulous adherence to truth, makes equally manifest the latent breach between his Port Royal friends and himself. I refer to the matter of the signature.[2]

As a matter of fact, Pascal had always outstripped or dominated the "party" with which he found himself accidentally associated, and with whose sentiments he had formerly been "entangled."[3] He unquestionably had the right to say: "I am not of Port Royal," for he had always been beyond and above the little Jansenist church; his spirit found itself too closely confined there; it could not hold him—the great Church alone, the Universal Church, could be his abiding-place. Let us recall his profession of faith to Mlle. de Roannez: "The body is no more alive without the head than the head without the body. He who separates himself from one or the other no longer belongs to the body, or to Jesus Christ. . . We know that all virtues, martyrdom, mortification of the flesh, and all good works are useless outside the Church, and the communion of the Head of the Church, who is the Pope. I shall never leave this communion, at least I beg God to give me grace to remain in it, for otherwise I should be eternally lost."[4]

During the last part of his life Pascal gradually withdrew from Jansenism and in the last months he seems to have definitely dissociated himself from it.[5] But this was not without a struggle. At one time it even seemed as if Pascal, in his zeal for truth, were ready to resist the Pope. He was not only opposed to a pure and simple signature of the formulary, maintaining that the question of the fact and the faith are inseparable; he went so far as to insinuate that the Pope was desirous of condemning the dogma of efficacious grace; he went so far as to say that the Pope might have betrayed the truth. And when he found that his former friends were themselves abandoning the cause of truth, he fainted away in his excessive grief. . .[1] But when he came to himself he opened his eyes and peace took possession of his soul. He realized that into his zeal for the truth that he loved above all things he had put the pride of his human *ego* and attachment to his own good sense, instead of employing the spirit of humility, submission, and obedience in which true Christianity consists. Had he not made an idol of truth itself? Had he respected and adored the rule of God in His Church? For we must adore His rule alone, we must love none but that; whatever is apart from that is error. Pascal recognized his error; he made his submission; his pride was overcome and light dawned for him. When, how, and in what circumstances we do not know, and probably we shall never know.

---

[1] *550.* Quoted by Mme Périer, I, 101-02; 33.

[2] X, 161-267. Upon this whole matter, as upon Pascal's final feeling with regard to it, and his attitude to Jansenism, and the value of Beurrier's testimony, see Appendix V.

[3] These are the expressions Pascal used in a confidential conversation with Beurrier, according to the latter's account (X, 338).

[4] Sixth letter to Mlle de Roannez (VI, 216-7; 218-9). The seventeenth *Provinciale* and *871* and *872* are of a similar tenor.

[5] Beurrier (X, 338). See App. V. Beurrier adds: "his sentiments were always strongly orthodox, and perfectly submissive to the Church and to the Holy Father," and "he died a good Catholic."

In any case an important document, and one that to me appears incontestable,[2] informs us of the decisive evolution wrought in Pascal's mind during the last months of his earthly life. If it does not go back over the change, it indicates what the end of it was, and thus permits us to measure the distance travelled. This document is the formal, explicit, and formally reaffirmed testimony of the Curé of St. Étienne du Mont, Beurrier, Pascal's own parish priest.[3] In his last illness Pascal had sent for him that he might follow faithfully the rule established by God and His Church, and it was Beurrier who assisted him during the six weeks that preceded his death, heard his confession on several occasions and administered the Sacraments to him. It was he with whom Pascal talked very frequently and very confidentially, who reported his words and confirmed them in his Memoirs, and who, whatever one may say, could not have been mistaken about Pascal's opinions and intentions. Now according to Beurrier's testimony Pascal, without having altered his mind concerning the recent laxity of morals, which he considered extremely dangerous,[1] "groaned in spirit at the sight of this division among believers who displayed such excessive warmth in their discussions," when they ought rather, in the spirit of united love, "to combine their spiritual weapons to direct them against real heretics and infidels, instead of fighting amongst themselves." He said moreover, "that they had tried to entangle him in these disputes, but for two years[2] he had prudently withdrawn, seeing that these questions were encumbered with so much difficulty"—questions concerning grace, predestination, the authority of the Pope and its limits; "and that, seeing that he had not studied the Schoolmen, and had had, both for the humanities and for philosophy and theology, no other teacher than his own father, who had instructed and directed him in the reading of the Bible, and about Church Councils, the Fathers and ecclesiastical history, he considered that he ought to withdraw himself from these disputes and arguments, which he regarded as prejudicial and dangerous, for one might err in saying too much or too little. He therefore adhered to the Church's view upon these great questions, and desired to be absolutely submis-

---

[1] Marguerite Périer (X, 401).

[2] *Vide* App. V. The document in question is Beurrier's Memoirs (II., pp. 486-500), about which a controversy has raged for more than two hundred and fifty years.

[3] From June 29th, 1662, Pascal had been removed to the Périers' house "on the rising ground between Porte St. Marcel and Porte St. Victor, in the parish of Saint-Étienne du Mont." Before that he had been living outside the Porte St. Michel, in the parish of St. Cosme, not far from St. Sulpice, an anti-

---

Jansenist church, which he was in the habit of frequenting, as we learn from the delightful story of the young girl whom he befriended (I, 90; 29). cf. Jovy, *op. cit.* IV, 1911.

[1] Marguerite Périer (X, 402).

[2] That is, "in the last two years, 1661 and 1662," or "from November, 1661 to July, 1662." This was the invariable method of reckoning at that time (X. 338, note 1).

sive to the Vicar of Christ, who is the sovereign Pontiff" (X, 387-8).

Shortly before his death,[1] he undertook a religious retreat, "God," says Beurrier, "desiring to prepare him thus for the worthy death of the saints, for he spent several weeks in exhaustive spiritual exercises, penitence, mortification of the flesh, silence, and a very strict examination or review of his life. Then he made a general confession, distributed alms generously, sold his carriage and horses, his tapestries and beautiful furniture, his silver, and even his library, with the exception of the Bible, Saint Augustine's writings, and a very few other books, and gave the money received for them to the poor. He dismissed all his servants, and went to live with his sister Mme. Périer so that he might no longer be burdened with the cares of a household, as she herself informed me. He established a rule of life on the Gospel principles, which are: (1) renunciation of self, of all pleasure and luxury, and vain pomp; (2) doing all the good one can in the pure sight of God, for the love of Him and for our own perfecting; (3) loving one's neighbour and one's own soul with a disinterested love in the sight of God" (X, 391-2).

What struck all who came into touch with him in his last days was his simplicity, a rare quality in a mind such as his. The parish priest of St. Étienne continually said of him: "He is a child, humble and submissive as a child" (I, 104; 35). In the midst of his sufferings his greatest trouble was not being able to communicate, and, since he was not able to do it through the Head, Christ, he tried to do it through His members, who are the poor, and to have a poor invalid brought to his home, who should be looked after exactly as he was, or else to be taken himself to the Hospital for Incurables, for he had a strong desire to die in the company of the poor (I, 112; 39). However, the pains in his head grew increasingly severe, and he was seized with such violent convulsions that they believed him to be already dead. But God, who desired to reward his fervent desire for the Sacraments, miraculously suspended the convulsions, and restored all his faculties, "so that the Curé, coming into his room with the Blessed Sacrament, called out to him '*Here is Our Lord whom I am bringing to you: here is He whom you have so ardently desired.*' These words recalled him entirely to himself, and when the priest approached to give him communion he made an effort, and raised himself that he might receive it with greater respect. The priest having interrogated him concerning the chief mysteries of the faith, according to custom, he replied distinctly 'Yes, Monsieur; I believe all this, and with all my heart.' Then he received the holy viaticum and extreme unction with such tender love that he shed tears over them. He made the responses throughout, and thanked the priest; and when he blessed him with the ciborium, he said '*May God never forsake me!*' and these were practically his last words. . ."

---

[1] Beurrier says "two years before his death" (X, 391). This retreat must have taken place during the winter of 1661-2, that is, when Pascal decided to withdraw from the controversies.

He died twenty-four hours later, on the 19th of August, 1662, at one o'clock in the morning, aged thirty-nine years and two months.

Thus passed away a man of singular genius. To a marvellously acute and penetrating mind he added a most passionate ardour. And it is especially wonderful that this ardour which inspired all his actions and breathed through all his works, transfiguring all he touched and all he did, never led his spirit into excess, so that his work alone, or nearly so, among all the works of men, at any rate among those of the thinkers and philosophers, remains as complete in all its parts, as firmly established and as vital, as when he first produced it. And the reason for this is that he humiliated himself before reality and before his Creator, and man is not truly great unless he does this.

Pascal exalts the "power of reason," the "incomparable" greatness of the thought that can encompass the universe, the thought that makes man truly great.[1] The reason which Pascal delights in curbing and disparaging, in seeing "humiliated and entreating," is not the reason which recognizes that "man is created but for infinity," and which, relying on the heart, is directed towards the infinite. It is the "arrogant reason" of the philosopher which (wrapped proudly within itself, and "swayed in all directions," because it is deprived of the sight of its aim and destitute of any guiding rule), aspires to erect its own judgment as "supreme arbiter of the world," and "to compose the machine" or reconstruct the universe by its own unaided powers, with the ideas it creates for itself, and through a simple process of reasoning.[2] If by "reason" we mean this arrogant yet limited faculty, Pascal most certainly is against reason, and Molière, like all Frenchmen, no less so.[3] But Pascal does not depreciate this false reason except to enhance the true reason, that which is subordinate to truth and reality, and submits to them, since the right use of reason is to bow to the actual. "There is nothing so proper to reason as this repudiation of reason." It is through submission to the infinite that reason conquers and possesses itself, becomes capable of continual progression and constant acquisition; it was by submission to the infinite that Pascal was able to attain balance, in himself and in his work.

Through this quality Pascal is in line with the whole French tradition, but he outstrips and perfects it.

"Perfect reason shuns all extremes," says Molière (*Le Misanthrope*, I, i). And Pascal says: "We leave humanity behind us when we leave the middle course. The greatness of the human mind consists in knowing how to preserve the mean; far from its being great to quit it it is great not to quit it" (*378*). Pascal, like Molière, remains in the "intermediate," the mean between the two extremes,[1] for it is here that truth as a whole and consummate virtue dwell. But he puts all things in their true position and their right order; he sees the whole in its true perspective; and, more correctly and clearly than any other, he realizes that these two extremes or these two contraries between which human reason has its being, are not on the same plane of reality, but situated on different levels, so that *humanity must find* its *balance through height, not through extension.* In the one case, equilibrium is attained as soon as we remain at equal distances from both extremes; in the other, it is broken or falsified from the time we attribute equal value to both the higher and the lower, as Pascal would say. We must, therefore, touch both extremes at once, but clearly recognizing them, distinguishing the lower from the higher, and lifting our eyes upward. "Man is neither angel nor brute, and the misfortune is that he who would play the angel plays the brute" (*358*); but man must make an effort so that the angel in him shall end in subjugating, but not suppressing, the "brute." It is absurdity and folly to want to raise oneself above humanity (*140*); but yet we must not forget that "man infinitely surpasses man" (XIII, 347; 531), and that for him not to rise is to fall.

---

[1] *268, 346-48, 365, 439.*

[2] *388, 274, 366, 79, 72, 1.*

[3] *Les femmes savantes*, II, vii, and the delightful Scene V of the *Mariage forcé*, between Sganarelle and the "sceptical doctor" Marphurius. It is by no means difficult to imagine the clever and acute sarcasm with which Molière would not have failed to overwhelm certain modern disciples of the German "idealism."

Therefore Pascal viewed all things in their *height*, or in their *depth*, and he ought to be regarded in the same way.

He noted all that scepticism has noted, concerning our contradictions, our miseries and frailties, our extravagant code of morals, our feeble human justice; but he looked further still, because, having seen all that, he provided us with the means of getting away from it. A fact proves nothing against the validity of the law, nor slackness in morals against morality, nor the contradictions in man's nature against justice and truth; they bear witness to them.

---

[1] "I do not admire the excess of a virtue, such as valour, unless at the same time I see the excess of the opposite virtue (as in Epaminondas, who had exceeding valour and exceeding kindliness), for otherwise it is not rising, but falling. Greatness is not shown by going to one extreme, but by touching both at once, and filling the whole space between. But perhaps this is only a sudden motion of the soul from one to the other extreme, and it is really always at one point only, like a firebrand. This may be so, but at least it marks the agility of the soul, if not its reach." (*353*). cf. *435*.

Like Kant, Pascal saw that the human reason thinks in terms of opposites, and always erects the antithesis in face of the thesis. But he saw too—and this Kant did not—that these antinomies are only intellectual and not actual antinomies, and he showed us how to get rid of them, by submission to the facts. Therefore instead of contradictions inherent in reason, or in reality, we have only facts that surpass us.[1]

Pascal saw, as Plato had suspected, and Hegel had demonstrated, that truth is generally made up of two contraries, or rather, "includes several truths which seem to contradict each other" (*862*), and that error arises from the exclusion of some one among them; liberty without law is anarchy, and law without liberty, tyranny. But while Hegel, carrying to its extreme consequences Spinoza's conception of immanence, affirms the *identity* of the contraries within the Absolute Idea, Pascal proclaims the *discontinuity* of the orders and, at the same time as their close *union*, the absolute *hetereogeneity* of the various degrees of dialectic. While Hegel ends in identifying justice and power, Pascal shows that justice cannot do without power, but subordinates it to itself. This view is of immense importance and far-reaching significance. These contraries, which make up the whole truth—wretchedness and greatness, liberty and infallibility, justice and power—are not to be found in the same category, or belonging to the same order. They are in different categories, and belong to orders that are *infinitely* far apart, and such that the lower order is as it were the *type* of the higher, so that we can and should take our stand upon it for the purpose of rising to the other by changing from the "for" to the "against." Thus there may be brought about a higher *harmony*, unity formed from diversity, "which is but an image and a result of the ineffable union of two natures in the person of a God-Man" (IV, 54; 160).

---

[1] This was clearly recognized by Cournot, after Pascal (*Essai*, §§ 145 and 146).

In this way the quality of the Pascalian apologetics is clearly defined. On the one hand, indeed, Pascal has established the method known in our days as the *method of immanence*, in the sense that he addresses himself to the heart of man, to make him not only comprehend, but desire, find, feel, his greatness in his very feebleness, true charity in his cupidity, and the order of God in human justice, that thus there may be aroused within him that aspiration towards the infinite which nothing finite can fulfil, that need of the supernatural which the whole of nature cannot satisfy. But on the other hand, too, Pascal with unparalleled vigour condemns the whole *doctrine of immanence*. He shows that between the spiritual order, the highest in nature, and the order of charity, which is supernatural, there is an "infinitely infinite" distance, and therefore real discontinuity. And this again is perfectly true, for if we may say that in one sense the supernatural completes nature, it is equally true to say that we do not pass from the natural to the supernatural by a continuous gradation; the supernatural does not arise out of the natural; still less can it be reduced to it. This is the reason that in seeking for true proofs of the Christian religion Pascal does not look for them in ourselves or in nature, but in *facts that surpass nature*—prophecies, miracles, the perpetuity of the Christian faith. . . This is Pascal's whole argument. And thus the discontinuity between the natural and the supernatural is such that God alone, by the grace He gives us, can help us to cross the yawning abyss between the two and fill it up, but fill it in such a way that what, viewed from below, appeared to be interrupted order seems, when viewed from above, to be continuous progress; and since grace imbues nature, permeating and raising and transforming it, sanctifying it from within without our knowing how, the natural discontinuity tends to be resolved into a supernatural continuity, and grace "is to some extent natural" (*521*).

It is certainly not to be denied that Pascal, initiated into theology by way of Jansenism, (although he gradually cast it off to return to Catholic thought), gave too large a part to original sin in his apologetic, and exaggerated its consequences. Hence are derived the apparent scepticism and pessimism of one part of his work, the reverse side of which must really be studied before we can pass judgment on this point. From this also come certain statements open to dispute. Pascal asserts that original sin injured our human nature when it forfeited for us our supernatural state. This is quite possible; but it is an exaggeration to maintain, as he does, that our present wretchedness proves our original decadence, for man might have been created in his present state,[1] and then this wretchedness might have had to be accounted for by some other cause than sin, namely, by the natural imperfection of the created being. When Pascal, arguing from the fact of our wretchedness, comes to a conclusion regarding the actual existence of original sin, his reasoning is not wholly convincing. It retains, however, a certain power and probability,[2] for man's propensity to, and taste for, "forbidden fruit," the fact that we find evil easier than good, and that there is in it such "smoothness" and "enjoyment,"[3] in fact, all that Pascal brings forward concerning the miseries, contradictions and changes in man's heart, may well denote a kind of disproportion and instability. And is not this instability explained, as Pascal says, by the fact that we are no longer in the state wherein we were first created? Without lapsing into Jansenism it is in any case opportune to remind ourselves that man's nature is not wholly good, that we cannot simply follow it as Jean-Jacques Rousseau would have us do, and as many nowadays maintain. This error is the source of our greatest evils.[1] Pascal very effectually combats this, showing us from the facts that nature must be disciplined and corrected, subjected to law and order. And he very effectively combats human pride, the source of our error, by showing us that if we are to comprehend both the natural and the supernatural, reason must be submissive, and offer itself through humiliation to inspiration.

---

[1] Except for what we call "original sin," which is only known to us with any certainty through "revelation."

[2] God had established the first man in a state of grace, a supernatural state. By transgressing the Divine order he fell from this state, and in his fall dragged down all his posterity. This is, in substance, the Catholic doctrine on original sin, as defined at the Council of Trent (Denzinger, 670), and without going so far as to admit with Pascal—a view which is admissible, but not obligatory—that this fall injured and corrupted our natural faculties (which would be the case had we been created with full power or *dominium* over our lower faculties), it nevertheless is the result of this Fall that we are no longer in the state to which God had raised us. And this is enough to account for man's present condition, although it is not the only possible explanation.

[3] cf. *408*. *Ecrits sur la grâce*, XI, 148: "Our free will has remained susceptible to good and evil, but with this difference, that while in Adam there was no propensity to evil . . . there is now such readiness, such a strong enjoyment in evil through concupiscence, that man is inevitably borne towards it instead of towards good." We are tempted to believe that this expression savours of the diluted Jansenism that we find elsewhere in Pascal, but it is not so, for on this point we might quote many Catholic theologians who favour Pascal's view.

In this Pascal is right; herein he is the master of us all. Man infinitely surpasses man. We are finite beings suspended from the Infinite and tending towards it with all our powers. The magnetic pole for humanity is God. There is nothing that can ever take the place of God for the human being. Can science? Science is not an ideal, it is an instrument, of which we can make a good or a bad use, and of which, without the moral law as a guide, we make a terrible use. Idealism cannot, either, for every ideal is but an abstraction, a mere word, unless personified in God. He who puts his confidence in finite things and projects them into the absolute in accordance with the insatiable thirst of the human soul, will find both his reason and his will foundering when, sooner or later, finite things fail him. Nothing finite can fill the infinite gulf or satisfy our instinct of immortality. This tendency to surpass ourselves continually, however high we may have placed our aim, does not seem to arise in our own nature, which is finite, and hence it seems to have been implanted in us by a cause which is without limit in its power of compulsion. This is the conclusion drawn from the actual facts, and it leads us towards the Infinite. On the other hand, it is clear that if the Infinite were to give Himself to us, He would fill to overflowing the infinite and empty void in our nature and satisfy all our longings. Are we able to receive Him? We cannot say *No*, but we cannot say *Yes*, except that it is likely. In this as in all else, the facts alone can reply in a decisive way.

---

[1] It must not be forgotten that Bolshevism is to a great extent the product of Tolstoi's inculcation of Rousseau's principles, and of his unbounded confidence in natural goodness.

Why should this be so? Pascal placed his finger with unerring aim on the reason for it. Reality is not to be measured by our concepts, or by what we designate the "possible," but what is possible, as well as our concepts, must be measured by reality. The very basis of human knowledge, the source of all its progress, consists in the submission of reason and its continuous adaptation to facts that are not only incomprehensible but inconceivable. Pascal, one of the founders of modern science, and the one of all others, possibly, who most definitely grasped its essential features, took this thoroughly into account. He realized that human reason has but one road to travel. Nature is one datum; the supernatural also is a datum, but one of an infinitely higher order. Reason is necessarily exposed to error when it aspires to reconstruct reality by starting from its own concepts. The only way for it to attain truth in all things (as far as it is capable of this), is to start from facts or immediate data, and recognize their nature even when they surpass the reason. Herein we have the principle of a revolution as great as that of Kant, and one that is effected in the opposite direction. Kant made the universe revolve around the human mind; Pascal brings man back to the contemplation of the universe, which is the work of God.

To the vital question which man puts to himself, a question compared with which all scientific problems are but trifling and frivolous, to use the forcible expression employed by this great scientist,[1] facts alone can furnish an answer, if there are facts which permit us to conclude that a realization of the supernatural has been granted to man. This is what Pascal says, and after reviewing the facts and history impartially,[1] he concludes thus: the facts exist, and they prove that the supernatural has been conceded to man, and that with the help of grace he can rise to the supernatural order, the order of charity, and while waiting to see God face to face can "cleave to Him with a love which will attain no other perfection than changeless stability in the glorified life."

---

[1] *Esprit géométrique*, IX, 262; 180: "It is worrying to have to stop for these trifles, but there are times for frivolling."

But it is time to conclude. My readers and I must part company, and we must say farewell to Pascal, though not without regrets, for we can never have enough of such a man. In order that we may profit from contact with him for as long as possible, let us read his work, let us meditate upon his *Pensées*. In him men's souls can meet and unite, and from him their intellect can acquire fresh light.

Descartes, Pascal—both admirable guides for our thought, so safe that we have but to be faithful to their principles to be able to readjust or, if need be, complete their doctrine. It is remarkable how well these great minds of the great century in France have been able to achieve stability and how much there is of precision, clearness, strength, and depth in their thought, both in matters of ethics and of religion. Descartes and Pascal are counted among the number of those who have laid the foundations of modern science, and we are justly proud of the fact. Now these artists in science, these masters of thought and language, these great and accomplished rationalists, far from being hampered in the upward flight of their genius by religious truth, discerning in the same glance all that it contains of the *rational* and of the *transcendent*, place it at the very summit of that human thought which culminates in them. Thus they demonstrate that it is not a hindrance but a stimulus, that it neither constrains thought nor obscures it, but disciplines, exalts and enlightens it. They have not, like the German philosophy, made a god to their own measure. Great Christians no less than great scientists, they have worshipped the God who created them; they have submitted to the Infinite and by this submission freed thought in all its domains from the shackles that fettered it; and they have shown us the real use of reason, which is its recognition of that which surpasses it and gives it its being.

---

[1] "It is no good arguing; you must confess that the Christian religion is something marvellous. That is because you were born in it, someone will urge. Far from it; for that very reason I harden myself against it, for fear of being prejudiced, but although I was born in it, I do not fail to find it marvellous" (*615*).

We are not masters either of time or space: they do not depend upon us, for we cannot fill them; but we do not depend upon them, for time cannot contain, nor space engulf, beings that are created for infinity. Let man then through his reasoning powers and his heart cleave to justice and truth, in the infinite immutable Being in whom they subsist. God alone can satisfy the demands of both the reason and the heart, because He alone is our true good and He alone is worthy of our love. Then, we shall realize within ourselves and we shall prepare outside ourselves, as far as our strength serves us, and with the help of One who is mightier than we, that higher equilibrium which will secure our happiness, that equilibrium in motion which tends to God through love, as its final end and its primal source.

# APPENDICES

I. *Note on the principle "that a continuous magnitude is not increased, however many magnitudes of a lower order be added to it"* (III, 367).

To illustrate this principle let us return to the method applied to finding the area of the parabola.

Let us consider the parabola $y=x^2$. The area contained between this curve, the axis of $x$, and the parallel to $Oy$ of the abscissa 1, evaluated as the sum of the areas of the small rectangles with sides equal to $\frac{1}{n}$ and to $\left(\frac{1}{n}\right)^2$, $\left(\frac{2}{n}\right)^2$, $\left(\frac{n}{n}\right)^2$, may be represented by the formula:—

$$\frac{1^2+2^2+\ldots+n^2}{n^3}=\frac{n\,(n+1)(2n+1)}{6n^3}=\frac{(1+\frac{1}{n})\,(2+\frac{1}{n})}{6} \qquad [A]$$

that is, that when $n$ is very large, the area sought is $\frac{2}{6}=\frac{1}{3}$

Now when we take the sum of the areas of the small rectangles whose sum is equal to the area sought, *we may neglect one of them without altering the final result.* Let us neglect the last, for instance. The sum of the areas becomes:

$$\frac{1^2+2^2+\ldots+(n-1)^2}{n^3}=\frac{(n-1)n(2n-1)}{6n^3} \qquad [B]$$

This result is of course different from [A]. But when $n$ becomes very large, the final result obtained in the two cases is the same. In fact:

$$\frac{(n-1)n(2n-1)}{6n^3}=\frac{(1-\frac{1}{n})(2-\frac{1}{n})}{6}$$

Now when $n$ is very large, $\frac{1}{n}$ is very small, its numerator is very nearly 2 and the area sought is $\frac{2}{6}=\frac{1}{3}$, that is, exactly the same as in the first case [A], in which we have the sum of the areas of *all* the small rectangles.

We should arrive at the same result if we were to neglect any *fixed* number whatsoever (but not a number *n*, whatever *n* may be) of these small rectangles. This allows of our concluding with Pascal that we do not increase (or diminish) a continuous magnitude when we add (or subtract), as often as we like, magnitudes of a lower order of infinity.

Pascal therefore clearly understood the theory that infinitely small quantities are negligible in respect to finite quantities; this is precisely the significance we attach nowadays to the idea of *mathematical infinity*. (cf. Hatzfeld, *Pascal*, p. 168). And for this reason, says Pascal elsewhere (*Lettre de Dettonville à Carcavi sur la roulette*, 1658, VIII, 352), "I should find no difficulty in making use of this language of indivisibles, the *sum of lines*, or the *sum of planes*," or again, the *sum of ordinates*, "since we only understand by that the sum of an indefinite number of rectangles made by each ordinate with each of the little equal parts of the abscissa, the sum of which is certainly a plane area," not differing from the area sought "except by a quantity less than any assigned quantity. . . So that when we speak of *the sum of an indefinite multitude of lines*, we always refer to a certain straight line by whose equal and indefinite parts they are multiplied.

In this way we can bring out Pascal's fundamental point of view, which may perhaps be expressed thus: *The sum of an infinitely great number of infinitely small quantities* (such as the sum of ordinates multiplied by a certain finite straight line, the diameter or the abscissa which, like any continuous magnitude, contains an infinitely large number of infinitely small magnitudes), *may have a finite value, while the sum of a finite number of infinitely small quantities is always an infinitely small quantity, and therefore negligible with respect to the finite magnitude under consideration which is of a higher order of infinity.*

Pascal enunciates the same principle in the *Esprit géométrique* when, arguing against the idea of a space actually divided into a certain *finite number* of indivisibles, he shows that according to this idea, of two squared spaces, one of which is the double of the other, the one ought to contain double the number of the indivisibles in the other (which is impossible, for there is no square number the double of another); thus he shows that the finite can only be compared with the finite, and the infinitely little with the infinitely little; the divisible infinites of space with the divisible infinites of time, a finite space with a finite time (IX, 261-2; 179). Several units may undoubtedly compose a number, because unit and number belong to the same category, whatever the Greek geometers may have held, but the indivisibles, which in space are without extent, taken in as large numbers as you like, can never form a space, because indivisibles and space are not in the same category. "An indivisible multiplied as many times as possible can never form anything but one single indivisible." It is the same with rest and motion, instants and time; "all these things are heterogeneous to their magnitudes," as the indivisibles are heterogeneous to space so that the multiplication of the former will never yield the latter, and the division of the latter will never bring them within the former (IX, 266-8; 182-3). Both belong to different *orders*.

II. *Note on the theory enunciated in* Pensée 862 (folio 275) *relating to the reconciliation of contraries*. Pascal says:

> "The faith includes many truths which seem to contradict each other: *A time to weep, and a time to laugh*, etc. (*Eccles*. III, 4). *Answer, answer not*, etc. (*Prov*. XXVI, 4, 5).
>
> The source of this is the union of the two natures in Our Lord.
>
> And the two worlds also. The creation of a new heaven and a new earth (*II Pet*. III, 13). New life, new death. All things in pairs, and the same names persisting.
>
> And lastly the two natures that are in the righteous, for they are two worlds, and a member and image of Christ. And thus all names are suitable to them, righteous sinners, living death, dead life, elect outcast, etc.
>
> There are then a great number of truths, both in religion and in morals, that seem mutually repugnant, and yet all subsist in a wonderful order.
>
> Every heresy has its origin in the failure to conceive the concord between two contrary truths, and the belief

that they are so incompatible [an expression erased here]. The origin of every heresy is the exclusion of some of these truths.

And the origin of all the objections that heretics urge against us is ignorance of some of our truths.

And it generally happens that, not being able to imagine any relation between two contrary truths, and believing that the affirmation of the one involves the exclusion of the other, they cling to the one and reject the other, and think in the contrary sense from ours. Now the rejection is the cause of their heresy, and their ignorance that we think differently causes their objections.

First example: Jesus Christ is God and man. The Arians, unable to reconcile things they believe incompatible, say that He is man: in this they are Catholics. But they deny that He is God; in this they are heretics. They maintain that we deny His humanity; in this they are ignorant.

Second example: On the question of the Blessed Sacrament. We believe that the substance of the bread being changed, transubstantially, into that of the Body of Our Lord, Jesus Christ is really present therein. That is one truth. Another is that this Sacrament is also a type of that of the Cross and of glory, and a commemoration of them both. This is the Catholic faith, which embraces these two apparently opposed truths.

The heresy of our days, Luther [word erased] not conceiving that this Sacrament contains both the presence of Our Lord and the type of Him, and that it is at the same time a sacrifice and the commemoration of a sacrifice, they believe that we cannot admit one of these truths without rejecting the other on that account.

They cling to this one point, that the Sacrament is typical, and therein they are not heretical. They think that we reject this truth, and that is why they raise so many objections about the passages from the Fathers which maintain it. Lastly, they deny the Presence, and therein they are heretics.

Third example. Indulgences.

Therefore the best method to oppose heresies is to teach all the truths, and the surest way to refute them is to state them all."

Let us try to explain clearly, in theological terms and by means of examples borrowed from Christian dogma, the essential principle proclaimed here by Pascal, one which, we might say, dominates his whole argumentation and his philosophy so far as it is directly bound up with his doctrine of incomprehensibility.

A. In God, the supernatural Absolute, there are properties or attributes which according to the concept we have formed of Him are mutually exclusive, as for instance, liberty and unchangeableness. But reason tells us clearly that God is *unthinkable* (not unknowable) to us; hence our concepts and our expressions are not appropriate to Him and cannot even be so. If in God, as known by reason solely, we discover such *apparent* contradictions, we must not wonder at anything we find in God who is *One in Three*, as known through Revelation.

B. In Christ there are two active principles, the one divine, the other human. The first dominates the second as our reason dominates our members, but in a definitely higher way. The divine Principle which possesses itself absolutely, in the same way possesses the other principle, and, since the characteristic of the person is to possess itself, it follows that in Christ there is only one person, and that person Divine. But this effect cannot be realized in any other created beings belonging to the moral order. From their very nature, indeed, such beings depend directly upon God, and accordingly they cannot be entirely possessed except by Him in such a way as to lose their own responsibility. Neither by strong measures nor by friendly ones can we humanly make one single person out of two persons.

C. As to the relative supernatural or the grace of God in us, we must not forget that this supernatural is a relation between ourselves and God, and that as long as our present life lasts, this relation is unknown in one of its terms and unknowable in the other. We can then only speak of it as we speak of God, by applying to it concepts which, since they are modelled upon natural things, cannot suit the supernatural. Thus, for example, for all created nature God can be known only by inference and not by *intuition;* nevertheless St. Paul tells us (*I Cor.* XIII, 11, 12), that in heaven we shall see Him face to face, that is, by intuition. It is the same with the supernatural. It is a conception into which much mystery necessarily enters, but from which contradiction is entirely excluded. The supernatural is a transcendent quality which God alone can produce and which only a being belonging to the moral order can receive, but which this latter, however perfect he may be, cannot demand as the complement of his created nature. As to what this quality is in itself, we cannot say as long as we have not known it by direct experience. (cf. *I John*, III, 2).

D. The Eucharist seems to give rise to greater difficulties, but here we must define exactly what the teaching of the Church is. All that the senses perceive in the bread and the wine remains unchanged; its substance alone, that is, the part which can never be attained experimentally, is *entirely* changed into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ; thus the facts of the Eucharist take place outside the domain of experience. Moreover, we are dealing here with a glorified body, that is, with a class of existence upon which experience has no hold. When the first Eucharist was celebrated the body of Christ was mortal, no doubt, but only through a Divine decree and in view of our redemption, for this body, which would never know the corruption of the tomb, was already by nature essentially glorious. This is proved to us by the fact of the Transfiguration during which the body of Christ manifested to the three privileged disciples some traces of the glory proper to it as the Body united in its person with the Eternal Son of God. Thus, even then, as after His resurrection, this body could not be compared with perishable bodies, and consequently it is not reasonable to speak of an impossibility in connection with such a body, although it would be an impossibility for an ordinary body.

E. Lastly, as far as the agreement between divine omnipotence and human will is concerned, the union of the two natures in Our Lord permits us, following Pascal's thought (both here and in the *Entretien avec Saci*, IV, 54; 160), to understand by analogy that such agreement may exist. But we still cannot understand the way in which the Divine Principle contains the human principle in Christ.

III. *Note upon the various acceptations of the word* justice *in* Pascal.

1. If we would sum up as a whole the conception of justice in Pascal's writings, we must note carefully that among the diverse meanings which he attributes to this word, in conformity with the current use of it which is his general rule, the Scriptural or ecclesiastical use of the term is very important, not to say predominant and authoritative.

Now in Scripture the word *justice* most often denotes [A] a *general and supernatural virtue* which includes all our duties either towards God or to ourselves and our fellow-men, these last two in their turn including *justice in the strict sense of the word* [B] and charity. In the same passage in *Wisdom*, viii, 7, justice is first of all understood in the sense of general virtue, as in many other passages (iii, 1; the souls of the just are in the hands of God); then it is envisaged as a particular virtue, the proper rôle of which, according to the Platonic view, is to maintain order in the mind between the three functions and the three virtues, wisdom, courage, temperance, as in the State between the three classes of society. In St. Paul's writings, justice is always the general supernatural virtue [A] which is bestowed by God and which raises man to the state of adoptive son of God. Thus the apostle contrasts those who submit themselves to the justice of God, that is, justice born of faith in Christ which comes through faith from God, and those who, not knowing the justice of God, seek to establish their own justice, which comes from the Law (*Rom.* X, 3. cf. *Phil.* III, 9), and he adds: "For with the heart we believe unto justice" (*Rom.* X, 10). In the language of the Church "state of justice" is the theological definition of the supernatural state. (Council of Trent, V, 1. Denzinger 670).

The two chief meanings of this word *justice* are to some extent one. In any case, there is a certain analogy between them, though it does not go so far as to create a real resemblance in the things they designate. Justice properly so called, or particular justice [B] makes us render to *others* what we owe to them: between individuals commutative justice regulates contracts, or exchange upon equal terms; distributive justice, less precise but no less obligatory, governs the relations between superiors and inferiors, and renders to each individual according to his works. Now justice as a general virtue [A] resembles particular justice in this sense, that it makes us render to *each* his due—to God, to our neighbour and to ourselves. *Cuique suum.* In its general acceptation it is order, or, as St. Thomas says (*Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 58, a. 3), that which rectifies human actions and makes them what they should be according to natural law, the reflection of the eternal law. He who does not order his actions according to this higher order is unjust (cf. Pascal, *Pensées*, *477*). Justice, so understood, is nothing else than the order desired by God; it is inseparable from that order. It might be only natural, and it is supernatural only because man has been raised to the supernatural state. But through that fact it greatly exceeds particular justice [B].

It is in this general and altogether higher sense that Scripture speaks of justice as an attribute of God. God is just because by reason of His goodness and power, His perfection, it would be impossible for Him not to give every man what he needs for the attainment of the end to which He summons him; and He is just, too, because He is obliged to make the order He has established respected, by suppressing all violation of the order and its source, which is the Good. From this last point of view [C], Divine justice (*κρίμα, κρίνω, κρίσις*) is considered especially as a repressive or chastising power. Thus in *Rom.* II, 5-8, it is said that God's justice re-establishes order by punishing the guilty and by the exercise of His anger, but we cannot tax this justice with being unjust (ἄδικος). St. Thomas observes (*Sum. Th.* I-II, q. 87, a. 3) that the divine justice involves eternal damnation when God's order has been violated in its principle in a way that is irreparable.

2. These distinctions are necessary if we would interpret

Pascal's thought on justice aright. The various acceptations of the term are all found in his writings, and not always very easy to distinguish. The first sense [A] is specially to be found in the *Écrits sur la grâce* (XI, 165) and in the *Pensées*, section VII, especially the fragments *435*, *502*, *504*, *513*, *514*, *531*, *534*; *477*, *492*, *540*.

In Section V of the *Pensées*, it is justice in the sense of [B], but in relation to the norm [A], and this makes human justice appear to Pascal very unjust.

Lastly the sense [C] is frequently found in Pascal, very closely allied with the sense [A], as for instance when he writes: "God's justice must be vast like His mercy. Now justice to the damned is less vast and should be less shocking than mercy to the elect" (*233*), since, as he explains elsewhere (*Écrits sur la grace*, XI, 148), all men being "equally worthy of everlasting death and God's anger, God might with justice have abandoned them all without mercy to damnation." From this it follows, as Bossuet says, (*Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, II, 4), speaking of the chastisement meted out to Adam, "the justice as well as the mercy of God cannot be measured by that of men," or, to use the term employed by Pascal, both are vast. In this same sense Pascal, following St. Augustine, writes, and not without some exaggeration: "What can be more opposed to the rules of our feeble justice than to damn to all eternity an infant incapable of exercising the power of will, for a sin in which he seems to have had so little share, that it was committed six thousand years before he was born?" (*434*). Man then cannot judge of the divine justice (in the sense [C]); all that he can and should affirm is that it is *order* (in the sense [A]), And it is just in the name of this demand for order that Pascal can write: "We are born so contrary to this love of God, and it is so essential for us, that we must be born guilty, or else God would be unjust" (*489*).

In his introduction to the *Pensées* (XII, cxix *et seq.*) Brunschvicg has clearly brought out this last aspect of Pascalian doctrine, but he has done it in such an exclusive and entirely Jansenist manner, that Pascal's thought seems to be somewhat distorted in it. If indeed it is true to say that Pascal finds an absolute disproportion between human and Divine justice, it is too much to maintain that in his view grace is the subversion of humanity, that religion is contrary to reason, and that between man and God there is an invincible opposition. This is only one aspect of Pascalian doctrine; according to the other (for his teaching is perfectly equilibrated), grace completes nature, which is its type, in such a way that "it is to some extent natural" (*521*); religion perfects reason, and surpasses it without running counter to it; and our justice, unjust as it is, is as it were a reflection of Divine justice, since it denotes our attachment to order. Moreover, when Pascal affirms: "It is impossible that God should ever be the end, if He be not the beginning" (*488*), when he asserts that true justice is charity, which is supernatural, since *grace alone gives charity*, he enunciates in no sense whatever a "Jansenist principle," as Brunschvicg maintains (554, note 4), seeing that this is one of the fundamental tenets of the most orthodox Catholic doctrine.

3. The distinctions we have drawn in this matter permit of our throwing some light upon the interpretation of *425*, which has erroneously given occasion to some critics to tax Pascal with fideism.

When Pascal writes, at the beginning of this fragment, "that man without faith cannot know the true good, or justice," he clearly takes the word "justice" in its general and supernatural sense; and it is thus that he can write elsewhere (*668*) that "God's will alone is all goodness and all justice." Now in this sense he is absolutely justified in saying that we cannot in our own strength reach the state of supernatural justice or blessedness, and that without faith we cannot even know what true justice is.

On the other hand, if it is a question of natural justice, its knowledge and practice, we may say of it what Pascal writes in the course of this same fragment, namely, that "for so great a number of years no one without faith has reached this point"; for it is a fact that if man of his own strength is *capable* of attaining to the knowledge and practice of natural justice, he has never, of himself, completely attained it; that he does not make a good success of it, and that in this he is in very much the same case as in his knowledge of the personal God. "Justice is subject to dispute" (*298*) and thus the reason by its unaided powers does not *in fact* succeed in establishing it upon a solid, incontestable, and immutable, foundation. Probably this is because the practice of the true *natural justice* is inseparable from *charity*, in its full sense, which is *supernatural*.

While to Kant the ideal is the juridical order, and his "kingdom of ends" is based upon such an order, Pascal's ideal is the "kingdom of charity" (IX, 373; 238), and it is this reign of charity that is guaranteed by the Church, the Body of Christ.

### IV. *Historical and critical note on Pascal's "wager."*

1. As early as 1671, the Abbé de Villars, in the fifth dialogue of his *Traité de la délicatesse*, very severely criticizes the argument of the wager, and blames Paschase (Pascal) for "supporting the greatest truth in the world, and the origin of all truths, by such a low, puerile idea," for after having so strongly condemned the lax casuists he does not hesitate "to make both religion and divinity depend upon a game of heads and tails." Bayle, in his *Dictionnaire*, under the article "Pascal," quotes this criticism in full, and in his turn criticizes it, approving the general idea of the wager though he gives the impression that the wager is the essential part of the apology. In England Locke, in his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, II, xxi, 72, makes use of the wager from the practical point of view when he esteems a good life, joined to the hope of eternal bliss, preferable to a bad life, accompanied by the fear of abysmal wretchedness; and Craig the mathematician, in his *Theologiæ christianæ principia mathematica* (London, 1699), applies it to estimating the worth of our hopes, in view of our remoteness from the promises made by Christ! Lastly, in the *Remarks on a little English book entitled "A letter about enthusiasm"* (Leibniz' correspondence with Pierre Coste, *Philosophische Schriften*, III, p. 415) we find this very just appreciation of the wager. "The author" (of the letter about enthusiasm) "believes this thought to be damaging to God, and inclined to make people more sceptical; but it seems to me that his argument is not sound, for it deals less with faith than with practice. M Arnaud in his *Art de penser* and M. Pascal in his

*Pensées* maintain that the safest way is to live in accordance with the laws of religion and virtue, because there is no danger in doing so, whereas there would be a good deal in not doing so. This reasoning is sound; it does not actually give belief, but it obliges a man to act according to the precepts of faith, for he cannot have faith when he likes, but he acts as he likes; it is not the lack of faith that really deserves to be punished, but malice and obduracy; this fact is explicitly stated by many theologians."

The significance of the wager argument was generally misunderstood in the eighteenth century. Voltaire, after having objected to the idea, saying that a man who is in doubt does not bet either for or against, writes "This article moreover appears a little unbecoming and childish; the idea of gambling, of loss and gain, is not suited to the gravity of the subject, and again, the interest I may have in believing a thing is not a proof of its existence . . . Your argument would only serve to make atheists, if the entire voice of Nature did not cry out that there is a God with as much of force, as there is of weakness in these subtleties" (*Remarques sur les Pensées de M. Pascal*, 1728). Fontenelle, to whom Condorcet attributes the lengthy *Réflexions sur l'argument de M. Pascal et de M. Locke concernant la possibilité d'une autre vie à venir*, inserted by him in his edition of the *Pensées* after the wager argument, lightly imagines the case of a man not obliged to bet, and proposes to him a bet in which there is such great inequality between the chance of winning and the chances of losing that the bet becomes an absurdity; he thus overlooks two of the essential conditions of Pascal's wager. Diderot wrote in his *Pensées philosophiques*, IX, 1746: "Pascal said: 'If your religion is false, you risk nothing by believing it true; if it is true, you risk everything in believing it false.' A Mahommedan priest could say quite as much as Pascal said." This objection falls to the ground if we place the wager where it ought to be, after the account of man's two conditions, taken from the Bible, and if we remember, too, that the sole aim of the wager is to prepare man's mind for proofs, but not in any way to take their place. Finally Laplace, in his *Essai philosophique sur les probabilités*, treats and refutes it mathematically in a somewhat summary manner, and tries to establish, by the calculation of probabilities, that the value of testimony promising an infinity of happiness is infinitely small.

In the nineteenth century the argument was warmly defended, and again hotly criticized, by a number of writers. Among the names of those who interested themselves in the subject are Lescœurs, Ancelot, Havet, Wm. James, Sully-Prudhomme, Brunschvicg, Janssens, Strowski, Giraud, Ravaisson, Droz, Lachelier, and Auguste Valensin.

2. Among the precursors of the wager argument, we should note Arnobius (*Adversus gentes* II, 4), who enjoins us to believe in the truth of Christ's promises because we run no risk in believing them, even if they are vain, whilst the unbeliever runs serious risk if they are true. Arnobius's ideas, repeated by Lactantius and St. Augustine, present more than one similarity with Pascal's. Raymond de Sebonde, in his *Théologie naturelle*, Silhon in *De l'immortalité de l'âme*, 1634, and Père Sirmond, in his *Démonstration de l'immortalité de l'âme tirée des principes de la nature*, all had somewhat similar ideas to Pascal's, the last-named approaching him most nearly in his argumentation.

We may ask whether these *precursors* of the wager were its *source*. It is certain that Pascal was acquainted with Sebonde, and it is not impossible that he knew Silhon; it seems probable that in his dispute with the Jesuits he made acquaintance with Sirmond's work. Lastly, and above all, we must not forget that Pascal originated the calculus of probabilities, that he was much occupied in defining the law of chances with respect to the points gained in games of chance, and that this question, which had absorbed him during the summer of 1654, still claimed his attention in 1657, as a letter from Claude Mylon to Huyghens, written on March 2nd, 1657, testifies (V, 417), as well as an allusion to the "mathematics of chances" in a letter from Arnauld, (March 10, 1657), referring to the decree of the Parliament of Grenoble against the *Provinciales* (Strowski, *Pascal et son temps*, III, p. 275). Pascal must have seen in it a means of convincing his freethinking friends (like Méré, who considered himself an advanced mathematician) and that, by the use of their own terminology and the turning of their own arguments against them. But, whether this be so or not, the significance of the argument is immensely greater than any circumstance which might have given rise to the idea. For my own part I am convinced, despite the contrary opinion of most commentators, that the wager, or at least the fundamental part of it, was intended to figure in Pascal's oral exposition, in the place where he himself wrote "Incomprehensible" (*430*: XIII, 334; 524). By virtue of this, and in this sense—but in this sense alone—the wager is one of the leading passages of Pascal's *Apology*, or rather, of that "apologetics of the threshold" which is to dispose the mind to receive the proofs of the Christian religion.

### V. *Note on Pascal's Jansenism, with relation to the signing of the formulary and to his death.*

Special authorities to consult: Jovy, *op. cit.*, I, 192 *et seq.;* 227; II, 34-191. *Grands écrivains* X, 161-267. On Pascal's death: Jovy *op. cit.*, I, 199 *et seq.*, 386, II, 255, 279-336, 403-85, 486-518. *Grands écrivains*, X, 336-403.

The assembly of French clergy, having received news of the Bull of Alexander VII, Oct. 16, 1656, confirming the Bull of Innocent X of May 31, 1653, and expressly declaring that the five propositions had been taken from Jansenius' book, and condemned in the sense in which the author had explained them, drew up on March 17, 1657, a formulary condemning the five propositions, which was to be signed by all ecclesiastics (VII, 4). Now the position adopted by Port Royal, which consisted in signing upon the question of *right* while making a reservation on the question of *fact*, became no longer tenable, after a first mandate of the vicars-general, June 8, 1661 (X, 77), which seemed to admit *implicitly* the distinction between the right and the fact, and had been signed by the nuns of Port Royal on June 22nd (X, 98), had been revoked by a decree of the king's council, dated July 14, 1661, and condemned by a papal brief August 1st (X, 161). A second mandate of the vicars-general on Oct. 31st, ordered all to "subscribe sincerely and willingly to the two said Apostolic Constitutions" by a pure and simple signature of the formulary (X, 163).

It was upon this subject, and at this very moment, as is commonly admitted, that the dissension between Pascal and Domat on the one hand, and Arnauld and Nicole on the other, first broke out. Pascal, who in the *Provinciales* had stoutly maintained the legitimacy of the distinction between fact and right, and who even at the beginning of June apparently (X, 167) accepted, like his Port Royal friends, the signing with a simple restriction, changed his attitude to the matter and maintained against Arnauld and Nicole: (1) that no one could sign the formulary absolutely without condemning Jansenius' meaning, and, with him, St. Augustine and the theory of efficacious grace; (2) that the mere expression of faith without anything more does not necessarily imply the exclusion of the fact, so that "such a profession of faith is at any rate equivocal and ambiguous, and consequently wrong." Such are the conclusions to be drawn from the *Écrit sur la signature* (X, 171-5; 239-243), which is known to us through a declaration by Chamillard, a doctor of the Sorbonne (X, 355; Jovy, I, 278) and by the manuscript refutation by Nicole. But neither the question of the date nor that of the fact itself is really perfectly clear.

1. It is uncertain whether the dispute between Pascal and Port Royal started with the second mandate, and whether the *Écrit sur la signature* dates from that time. Such is the commonly received opinion, and it is affirmed by Nicole (X, 341), Mme. Périer (X, 348), and Lalane (X, 358), but he contradicts himself; it is maintained also by Dom Gerberon (*Histoire générale du jansénisme*, Amsterdam, 1700, Vol. IV, pp. 299-300). It is quite possible that this may be so, but on the other hand we cannot fail to remark that *if this statement of Pascal's really dates from the end of his life*, since it apparently testifies that Pascal at that time was more Jansenist than the Jansenists, we have a very strong argument in favour of the thesis which the Jansenists had so much at heart; namely, that Beurrier was mistaken about the meaning of Pascal's declarations, because this manuscript expresses what his real sentiments were shortly before his death; whence we may conclude that his disagreement with Port Royal depended solely upon his having gone

further than Port Royal in the matter of *grace.* This is naïvely confessed by Lalane in his *Defense de la foi des religieuses* against Chamillard (X, 358), and it does not fail to inspire us with some doubt as to the worth of such affirmations, and the very insistence placed upon them by the friends of Port Royal.

Other very interesting testimonies seem to indicate that the dispute and Pascal's manuscript are both considerably earlier than the end of November, 1661 (Jovy, *op. cit.*, II, 165). Père Rapin in his memoirs goes so far as to maintain that the dissension between Pascal and his friends went back to the year 1655, when Arnauld published his first *Lettre à une personne de condition*, but his testimony is not of great value. Two other testimonies—those of Hermant and Chamillard (X, 355), the latter of whom affirmed that he had had Pascal's manuscript "in his own hands," seem more reliable, and this would show the time to be that of the first signature of the nuns of Port Royal. Nicole says (X, 368) merely that Pascal brought out certain writings on the occasion "of a signature" by the nuns there. Now we know that there was a first signature by the nuns on June 22nd, after the first mandate, and that they signed at that time (X, 98-9) speaking of the faith only, but not expressly rejecting Jansenius' meaning, thus following the advice of Arnauld and their theologians, but contrary to the advice of Pascal, as expressed in the *Écrit,* in the third conclusion. Pascal's sister Jacqueline, after having signed like the others, died of grief on October 4th of that year.

It is true that attention has been called to the fact that Pascal's words in this *Écrit* might apply to the second mandate only, wherein the distinction between right and fact was not drawn (X, 169). But this distinction was not "very explicitly denoted" (to use Pascal's own expression) in the first mandate either. And on the other hand, the restriction contemplated by Pascal and rejected by him ("those who sign in speaking of the faith only") seems more easily comprehensible with the first mandate, since the second seems to exclude even the possibility of a restriction of this kind; and it may equally well apply to the nuns' first signature (X, 98), as to the second (X, 165).

It is then very probable, even if not certain, that the *Écrit sur la signature* dates from the end of June, 1661, and was composed on the occasion of the first signature. In any case we can affirm certainly enough that it was earlier than the end of November, and the second signature, and that if it was written, as Nicole says, on the occasion of a signature, it can only have been on the occasion of the first.

The *Écrit sur la signature* did in fact form part of the papers confided to Domat by Pascal, not "at the time of his death" (as Brunschvicg says, smaller edition, p. 240), but several months previously, and certainly before Nov. 28th, 1661, the date on which the nuns signed the declaration of obedience to the second mandate, in accordance with Arnauld's advice and contrary to Pascal's. Pascal, in handing over the papers to Domat, begged him, according to Mme. Périer's testimony, "to burn them if the nuns of Port Royal held out under the persecution to which they were subjected on this account" (a period that had lasted since the end of June) "and to make them public if they yielded." Now Pascal could not have said this after Nov. 28th, for the nuns did not hold out under the persecution; still less could it have been written on the occasion of the third mandate (July 2nd, 1662), for "the nuns were left in peace," according to Dom Gerberon (Vol. IV, p. 378). Pascal's papers, moreover, were not published; it is probable that they were afterwards burnt, upon the request of Pavillon, the Bishop of Aleth (X, 193; Jovy, I, 378). We may add that if the writings handed over to Domat would have aided by their expressions and ideas and date to nullify Beurrier's testimony, it is hardly likely that the Jansenists would have allowed them to be burnt.

However that may be, let us remember this fact which, as we shall see, is of great importance: the *Écrit sur la signature* very probably dates from the end of June or the beginning of July 1661; it was in any case given to Domat before the end of November, and as a consequence it testifies only to Pascal's feelings before that date.

2. At first sight it may appear that Pascal showed himself in this matter more Jansenist than his friends. In

reality, as they viewed it and as they themselves agreed, his attitude manifested merely his "extreme scrupulousness in all that relates to religion" and "his excessive dread of offending against truth." To use Père Rapin's terms (X, 189. Jovy II, 298) Pascal was "a man of right judgment," upon whom "his marvellous genius for mathematics" had stamped "a character of stability and uprightness that made him search for truth in all things, unable to recognize it without embracing it, or to abandon it when he had once recognized it." He, therefore, could not approve of the "expedients" or "concealments" or "subterfuges" which his friends intended to use (X, 189), or support the "condescension" and "relenting" to which their anxiety for a present advantage led them (X, 343. Jovy, II, 420), and he desired them to act with more frankness and "sincerity."

Let us try to represent to ourselves as clearly as possible what Pascal's opinions upon this point were.

Pascal seems to have believed that the pure and simple signing of the formulary would bind the intellect on the question of fact *as well as* on that of right, for the two are not explicitly differentiated in the document. Now although the Church as the guide of souls may demand obedience and inward respect in this matter, it does not follow that its authority is the same with regard to the fact as with regard to the right. As a reliable theologian writes to me "the doctrinal infallibility of the Pope, defined at the Vatican Council, and identical with the infallibility of the Church, bears *directly* upon the truths of faith and morals contained in the deposit of Revelation, and *indirectly* upon the truths of a natural order, such as the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, presupposed by the first. Now the dogmatic fact, as it is called, that an erroneous religious doctrine is or is not to be found in such and such a book, is a fact that is not contained in the deposit of Revelation, and is not essential to the truth of that deposit. And the ever-increasing number of theologians who wish to extend pontifical infallibility to dogmatic facts, base their assertions on entirely different considerations. They say that if it were not so the Church, when she wished to inhibit the faithful from reading a book which might contain an erroneous religious doctrine, would be deprived of her lawful weapon. Now in such circumstances the Church has never been, and will never be, deprived of her lawful weapon, for in effect her divine power of guiding souls permits her by her power from on high, and without calling her doctrinal infallibility into account, to judge with sufficient certainty whether a book is dangerous, and without having to give any motive for her decision she can forbid its perusal by the faithful, on pain of committing a grave fault. Thus, as we see, the Church can erect here an insuperable barrier for her children's consciences. Moreover there is a general rule of criticism that should never be forgotten, and here least of all. When we have before us any important document (and this is of course the case with a solemn declaration of the Church) we must not demand from the text more than the minimum of its significance or content; if we demand the maximum we may sometimes expose ourselves to very serious difficulties. In the case under review, we might expose ourselves to engaging the Church absolutely and irrevocably, whereas she alone has the right to engage herself thus, and, when she makes use of it, she can speak clearly." In this matter Pascal might have been more yielding or less intellectually critical. But it must not be forgotten that these questions presented themselves then for the first time definitely.

At all events, Pascal's opinion is that in this matter the document binds the question of fact and faith inseparably and "according to the publicly expressed intention of the pope and the bishops, the fact considered here is not a pure and simple fact, but a fact which determines and denotes a right, and which is itself a right" so that "the reservation used by the nuns of Port Royal in their first signature, and still used by the Jansenists to-day, is not sincere" (Chamillard X, 355; Jovy I, 283). True frankness accordingly permits two attitudes only:

1. either to refuse to sign, that is, refuse to submit wholly and entirely to the Pope, which would be the logical attitude of those who refuse to admit the fact, an attitude which, according to Pascal, the Jansenists if they were sincere should adopt, and which, according to Nicole, Pascal advised;

2. or to sign unreservedly, and thus submit absolutely to the Pope, as Pavillon, bishop of Aleth advised, for he, like Pascal, regarded the fact and the right as inseparable (Strowski III, 356. Upon Pavillon's admiration for Pascal, cf. Jovy *op. cit.*, I, 369). Such, according to Beurrier, was Pascal's attitude during the last weeks of his life.

Now it is extremely probable that *Pascal*, in the interval between June 1661 and August 1662, *did indeed change from the first to the second attitude*, because he recognized that these matters were too intricate to be definitely settled by one man, especially one not versed in theology. Let us note also that, in the first as in the second attitude, there is, in Pascal, "*the same feeling*" (which explains his friend Domat's testimony, X, 371). This feeling is *the desire for truth above all else*, and the conviction that this pretended submission of Port Royal is but an artifice and that it really manifests, despite the apparent respect in words, a profound want of respect as far as the Pope is concerned. Upon this difficult question of the papal authority, as in all things, one may err in two ways, either in excess or in defect, "by saying too much or too little," and Pascal disapproves of both. Beurrier's testimony on this point (X, 387-8) is borne out by all that we know of the Pascalian teaching. But this profound and subtle thought seemed to escape most people, and especially the prejudiced. Port Royal did not comprehend it; only the "naïve" Beurrier grasped Pascal's feeling without misunderstanding it.

This, therefore, is the conclusion to which I have come. During the summer of 1661 Pascal, carried away by his love of truth, was ready to break with the Pope and with the Church, but after that period a decisive crisis led him to comprehend that the love of truth which, apart from *charity* and *humility*, is but an idol, demanded that he should submit to the Church—that Church whose history is the history of the truth, and of which the Pope is the head without which the body could not exist. By doing this he reverted to his most profound opinion; he reconquered, if we may put it thus, his real *ego*, which Jansenism had for a time hidden from him; he became fully conscious of the fundamental idea that inspired his *Apology*, which is an anti-

Jansenist idea. Between July 1661 and August 1662, Pascal reading in the light of events, and above all in the increasing light of truth which at the approach of eternity illumined his spirit and enlightened his mind (preparing him for the precious death of saints, as Beurrier said), became aware of all this. Returning to his true self, Pascal found himself a good Christian and a perfect Catholic once more.

3. This conclusion certainly assumes that Beurrier is a credible witness. Now this opinion is contested and will still be contested by numerous critics, who rely chiefly (1) on the fact that Beurrier, it is said, admitted that he might have been mistaken about the meaning of Pascal's words, and that he recanted his earlier declaration to Archbishop Péréfixe of 7th January, 1665 (X, 388), by his letter to Mme. Périer, 12th June, 1671 (X, 360. Jovy II, 454); (2) on the fact that Beurrier's *Mémoires*, rediscovered and published by Jovy in 1911, merely testify to his hopeless "mental confusion" as well as to his "sincerity" which forbids our calling in question the significance of the recantation that he signed (IV, lxxxi. cf. A. Gazier, *Les derniers jours de Blaise Pascal.*)

This reasoning, however, and especially its last feature, the subtlety of which seems to be overdrawn, is hardly admissible.

1. Beurrier's pretended "recantation" is known to us *from Jansenist sources alone*, and was not published until *seventeen years after Beurrier died*, in 1711, in a Reply of Père Quesnel to M. de Cambrai. Why did they wait till after Beurrier was dead to publish it, and that designedly (as we learn from Arnauld, who writes to Louis Périer about 12th May, 1688: "The foolish person whose declaration you dare not produce as long as he lives will not live much longer.")? This is a very curious circumstance, and throws very grave doubt on the authenticity of the testimony, as it has been transmitted to us (*vide* Jovy *op. cit.*, II, 455 and Brémond *op. cit.*, IV, 407 note). Let us note moreover, that this "recantation" bears upon one point only, namely, the *precise nature* of the difference of opinion between Pascal and Port Royal, a point of secondary importance to us and to Beurrier, and one of which, curiously enough, there is no question in the

*Mémoires.* But that this difference of opinion did exist, that Pascal did not share the sentiments of his Port Royal friends and had withdrawn from the party disputes concerning grace and the papal authority, and that with respect to these subjects he relied entirely upon the Church and upon the Pope, all this Beurrier at no time ever "withdrew," and he affirms it all with clearness and detail in his *Mémoires.*

2. The sincerity of tone manifest in Beurrier's *Mémoires* forbids us to call in question, not so much the "recantation" which interested people endeavoured to extract from him (the authenticity of which is at any rate exceedingly doubtful), as the explicit statement made by Beurrier himself in these *Mémoires*, which is indeed his last word on the subject

" . . . Some persons of both parties began to comment upon what I had written, and several of them came and asked me if that was M. Pascal's reply, and the expression of his opinion; and I told them that it most certainly was. Many of them told me that I had misunderstood his thought, begging me not to take it ill if they explained it differently from me. I told them to do as they liked, but as for me I was satisfied with what I had written: *Quod scripsi, scripsi.* I said that I would never be answerable for any document that seemed opposed to the explanation and the meaning I had myself heard from the lips of M. Pascal, whom I loved and esteemed sincerely, and even more for his charity, humility, modesty and submission to the Church and to the Sovereign Pontiff than for the greatness of his intellect" (X, 395. Jovy *op. cit.*, II, 498-9).

*Quod scripsi, scripsi.* This is what Beurrier expressly declares in 1691. We have the words in his *Mémoires*, the recent discovery and publication of which by Jovy have renewed the controversy and, in my opinion, terminated it. Others share my view (among them Strowski and the Abbé Brémond); here are the reasons upon which I support my conclusion.

1. To Beurrier's testimony a large number of testimonies of a contrary tenor may be opposed (X, 337 *et seq*). But all these testimonies, emanating from Jansenist sources and identical both in their purport and their form, really constitute but one. They do not fulfil either of the two conditions

requisite for valid evidence, for they are not *independent*, and since they are identical they are not *convergent* either. All these witnesses may have been mistaken, quite in good faith possibly, and I believe that they were mistaken, blinded by their interest in retaining Pascal, and incapable of penetrating his real thought on the matter.

2. But may it not be said that Beurrier was mistaken, and quite in good faith also, and that his evidence, by reason of the inaccuracy and confusion it contains, is not valid? We must come to an understanding on these two points.

(*a*) Differing from the Jansenists in this, Beurrier, being of no particular party (X, 394), was not interested in making Pascal out to be either a Jansenist or a non-Jansenist, and he moreover notes impartially that Pascal continued to condemn, as strongly as ever, the "recent lax code of morals" (X, 339 and 393). On the other hand we know that he frequently saw and was with Pascal during the six weeks that preceded his death, that he confessed him "several times" (X, 338 and 393), and "very often" conversed with him in a very intimate and "familiar" way. Given such conditions, can we admit that Beurrier would have been mistaken about his penitent's words and sentiments to the extent of believing that Pascal had withdrawn from the "party" and from the "discussions" of the Jansenists because he thought they went too far in these difficult matters when in reality Pascal had signified that he dissociated himself from their opinion because he found they did not go far enough? Such a hypothesis is not reasonably admissible. Even then, if we wish to maintain at all costs that there was a mistake on his part, we must, if we are to account for Beurrier's mistake, suppose that Pascal knowingly and voluntarily supported their misunderstanding, that he played the farce of entire submission to the Church, and died in this "disgraceful equivocation"; Pascal, the man who was so scrupulously devoted to the truth and to the practice of loyalty, and whose death was like that of a saint! There only remains then the conception that Beurrier was *not* mistaken about either the words or the true sentiments of Pascal, and that he perfectly understood and faithfully reproduced the attitude of the dying man—renunciation of his own will (*472*) and of the contentious spirit, humble submission in all things to the authority of the Church and the Pope, the limits of which he no longer endeavoured to trace (*vide* Brémond, IV 407; Stewart, *op. cit.*, p. 140).

(*b*) To say that Beurrier's testimony about the essentials is inadmissible because it is mixed up with lack of precision, inaccuracies, and digressions, is to allow oneself to be deceived by false appearances and to argue beside the point. Let us take an example to illustrate this. Let us suppose that a critic, attacking my account of Boutroux' evidence concerning the German who pretended to "construct God" (p. 258 note 1), proves that I was mistaken about the date (1869), the place (Heidelberg) and even the name of the German professor (Edward Zeller), it would be none the less undoubtedly true that Boutroux told me that he had listened to a German professor who pretended to "construct God." I guarantee the absolute veracity of the *fact*. Now in this case it is the *fact* that is the question; nothing else matters. I do not pretend to give you here a chronological account of Edward Zeller. The point that interests me, and that interested Boutroux, the gist of his conversation, was this *significant illustration* of the methods and doctrines of German idealism. To derive an argument from the looseness or the inaccuracy of the way the story is told, as far as a secondary matter is concerned, in order to dispute the truth of the fact itself that is in question, is a critical procedure which is very easy and ordinary, but in spite of appearances it is not admissible. Now the account given by Beurrier should be treated in the same way. He may have been mistaken on such and such a detail, on the date of Pascal's second retreat, for instance (cf. Jovy II, 502, however); his story may be uncertain and confused on certain points, but that is all beside the question. What really mattered to Beurrier, what he remembered, and what matters equally to us here, is to be sure whether Pascal, at the time of his death, had the feelings proper to a submissive and obedient Catholic, and whether he had withdrawn from all the disputes and discussions in which he had been involved. Now Beurrier categorically affirms that this was so. He affirms it without prejudice, with unquestioned loyalty, and with full knowledge of the matter; yet more, he solemnly reaffirms it in his *Mémoires*, maintaining it against all contrary interpretation, and we can ask nothing further.

3. Such testimony is amply sufficient to establish conviction in the mind of an impartial judge. But without any contributary testimony, no doubt it would not suffice for the judge or the historian to be able to make an official pronouncement thereon. *Testis unus, testis nullus.* One might take advantage of the old saying in Beurrier's case, if his testimony were the only one. But it is not so. As a confirmation of it there is another testimony, *independent* of his, and yet *agreeing* with his, and this is the testimony of Pascal himself. His inner life, his spirit, the very scheme of his Apology all attest the fact that Jansenist theology had not deeply affected him and that as he penetrated more profoundly within himself, he separated from it. Finally and above all, some very explicit fragments, such as *781* (explained on page 265 note 1), the first line of fragment *550*, and the fragment *865*, are *absolutely inexplicable* if we do not admit that in the last months of his life Pascal definitely renounced the Jansenist theology, that he withdrew from all "parties" and all "disputes" in order to make a humble and entire submission to the Catholic Church and to the Vicar of Christ, as Beurrier affirms (X, 394). To any impartial historian this conclusion will, I believe, appear as clear and certain as the conclusion at which we have been able to arrive concerning the date of Plato's works.[1] Indeed, it seems to me, the case has been decided and judgment given.

It was not unnecessary to try and elucidate this point, in order to reconstitute the true character of this thinker, almost a saint, whose thought overflows all limits, whose mind ranks above all parties, and who, in soul and body, could belong to no other than the Universal Church.

"To be a member, is to have neither life, being, nor movement save by the spirit of the body, and for the body. The separate member, seeing no longer the body to which it belongs, has but a waning and dying existence; . . . not having in itself a principle of life it only goes astray, and is amazed at the insecurity of its being, fully aware that it is not the body, yet not seeing that it is a member of the body. Then when at last it arrives at the knowledge of self, it returns as it were to its own home, and henceforth loves itself only for the sake of the body, lamenting that in the past it has gone astray . . . But in loving the body it loves itself, because it has no being but in it, by it, and for it: *qui adhaeret Deo unus spiritus est*. . . We love ourselves because we are members of Jesus Christ. We love Jesus Christ because He is the body of which we are members. All is one, the one is in the other, like the Three Persons" (*683*).

---

[1] *Vide* the author's *Notion du nécessaire chez Aristote.* Appendix I, pp. 212-213, 218

THE END

# INDEX OF TERMS, IDEAS, DOCTRINES

Absolute, 69[3], 249
Advent, 237[1]
Analysis, 134[2], 142, 164
Ancients, 70
Angel (neither—nor brute), 231, 250, 297
Animal, 70, 224
Antinomies, 177-81, 187, 298
Ardour (of love), 88, 95
Artifice, artificial, 200, 259
Asceticism, 125, 132
Aspiration, 96, 97
Atheists, atheism, II, 23, 27, 175
Authority, in science, 70, 79, 181
—— civil, 212
—— religious, 131[2,3]
Automatic action, 253, 256

Beatitude, 78, 95
Beauty, 87
Behaviourism, 256[1]
Belief, 252[1], *vide* Heart, Faith, Will
Binomial theorem, 139
Blindness, 76-77, 159, 220, 222, 242[1]
Body, order of, 220, 221, 284
—— knowledge of, 196, 204
—— and members, 228-9, 287
Brute, brutalizing, 231, 250-1, 297

Carthusians, 251[2]
Casuistry, 33, 111-15, 117
—— and jurisprudence, 118, 119
Causality, 121, 287
Causes, 62[1], 64-5, 196, 208[1], 221[1]
Certainty, 61, 95, 248, 271
—— moral, 175, 182-3, 277, 280[1]
—— and infinite, 182, 253, 287
Charity, 31, 116, 146-8, 156-7, 278, 281[3], 289
—— order of, 74, 156, 169, 230, 253
—— God, King of, 145
—— and truth, 161, 285
—— and justice, 311, 314
—— suffices, 183, 286; cf. Grace, 284
Chance, 200, 208[27], *vide* Custom
—— science of, 133, 141, 167, *vide* Concert, Probability.
Children, 286, 294
Choice, 245, *vide* Wager, V
Christians, 129-30, 214, 215, 230
Church, 99, 210[1], 265[1], 274, 275[2], 291
Combinations, combinative analysis, 138
Comprehension, 78, 122, 173, 215[3], 249, *vide* Thought
Computer, 56-7
Concept, conceive, inconceivable, 58, 62, 122, 163, 176-7, 179, 181, 186
Concert (convergence), 182, 279-81
Concupiscence, 41, 145[1], 228[1], 233, 282[1]
—— symbol of charity, 227, 230
Contingence, 133[2], 201
Continuum, mathematical, 90, 164
—— physical, 68
Contradictions, 203, 231, 236
—— source of 237
Contraries, 176-7, 298
—— union of the, 97, 122, 187, 298, 307-8
Conversion, 76-8, 88-9, 93-4, 95-7, 99-101, 220
Conviction, convince, 127, 171
Creation, 178, 205
—— of man, 235-6, 300-1
Credulity, 227-8
Cross, scandal of the, 114
Curiosity, 202
Custom, 199-201, *vide* Nature
—— in society, 210-13
—— and faith, 243, 253, 257
Cycloid, *vide Roulette*

Death, 80, 206
Definitions, 63, 172
Deism, 26-7
Delectation, 41, 121, 300
Demonstrations, 169-70, 175[1], 182
Despair, 123[1], 226, 233-4, 238, 265
—— its remedy, 236
Dialectics, 156[1], 176-81, 213[1], 215[2]
Discernment, 173[1]
Discontinuity, *vide* Heterogeneity

Discourse, 171[1], 232[2], 270, 271
Disillusion, 203, 204
Disorder, 202
Diversion, 205-9, 228
Diversity, 152, 172, 200, 281
Dogma, dogmatic, 121, 187, 232-3
Doubt, 190
Duty of man, 161, 207

Effects, (*vide* Causes), 209, 221
—— of nature, 240, *vide* Reason
*Ego*, 84, 103, 210, 202
Eloquence, 131, 171[1], 226
Empiricism, 201
End and order, 156, 281, *vide* Man, Nature
Equality, 145
Equilibrium, physical, 67, 69[1]
—— moral, 297
Equity, 210, 211
Error, 107, 115, 121[3], 170, 178, 197
—— a sign of truth, 209[3]
—— substitute for, 214[3]
*Esprit de géométrie*, *vide* Mind
Eucharist, 129, 220, 308-10
Evidence, 62[1], 63, 263
Evil 108, 227, 301
Evolution, theory of, 201
Experience, physical, 60-2, 65-7, 167
—— moral, 175[1], 270[3], *vide* Instinct
—— of God, 88, 168

Fact, dogmatic, 120[6] (121), 322-4
Facts, V, 176, 258-60, 272, 300-1
—— how established, 181-3, 260[1]
Faith, 62, 96, 161, 250-2, 264, 272
—— and reason, 79, 244[1], 252
—— and the senses, 260[1]
—— and feeling, 267[1]
—— true knowledge, 245[1]
—— the way of, 250, 257, 265-6
Feeling, 15[1], 93, 95, 175[1], 232[2], 271
—— acceptations, 267[1]
—— criticism of, 198, 267[2], 268: cf. Heart, Immediate, Nature.
Felicity, *vide* Delectation
Fideism, 177, 186, 267, 314
Figures, figurative, 55, 76-7, 219-23, 274, 276-7, 281[3], 282
Finite, 16, 90, 163-4, 210, 247, *vide* Infinite.
Fire, *vide* Ardour
Folly, foolishness, 55, 216[1]
—— of the Cross, 286: cf. 245[1]
Force (power), 146[1], 212, 298, *vide* Power, Justice.
Freethinkers, 23-7

Gauss curve, 141
General good, 215, 229[1]
Geometry, 54, 89, 133, 143, 163, 167
Glory, 130, 132, 134, 227
—— the glorified life, 287
God, of the Christians, 95, 253, 268[1]
—— the end and source, 77, 92-3, 97, 158, 225, 237, 285[5], 290
—— sensible to the heart, 266[1]
—— concealed, 76, 127[3], 129, 237, 242, 263, 278
—— wisdom, 235
—— power, 176
—— presence, 241
—— life in us, 92, 96, *vide* Grace 126, 129, 286
—— knowledge of, 94-7, 174, 177[1], 221, 244, 268, 309, 310
—— proofs of, 178-9, 224-5, 263, 268[1]
—— love of, 31, 76, 82, 93, 238, 268, 286, 294
—— who is not for, 246[1], *vide* Causality, Charity, Jesus Christ
Good, 89, 122, 159, 204, 212, 277
Grace, problem of, 101-103
—— actual, 101, 101[2]
—— efficacious, sufficient, 34, 102[5], 103, 121
—— sanctifying, 101[1], 101
—— and liberty, 34, 101, 102, 103, 161 265[1]
—— and nature, 188, 220, 299, 314
—— merited, 35[1]
—— the life of, in us, 77-8, 103[2], 107, 122, 126, 130: cf. charity, 284[1]
Greatness, 219-240, *vide* Soul, Wretchedness
—— mathematical magnitudes, 164, 305
—— worldly, and natural, 145
—— hierarchy of, 282

Happiness, search for, 158, 225
—— desire of, 159, 225
—— in God, 159, 229
Heart, 149[1], 174, 266-281
—— definitions of, 269[2], 270
—— the instrument of knowledge, 183, 253, 269-72

—— compared with and distinguished from feeling, 267-9, will, 268[2], reason, 269-70
—— order of the, 156, 272, 282, its part in belief, 271-2
—— makes no proofs, 272, but grasps their significance, 273, and effects their synthesis, 273
Hell, 240[1]
Heresies, 307-8
Heterogeneity, 163-6, 282, 298, 305-7
Hexagram, mystic, 54[1]
History, V, 241[1], 280
Holiness (sanctity), 47, 115, 279[1]
*Honnêteté*, 85, 144-6, 168, 217
Hope, 266, 288
Humility, humiliations, 123, 186, 249, 250-1, 289
Hydraulic press, 68
Hydrostatics, 67
Hypotheses, 62[1], 63[1]

Idea of truth, 161[1], 232[2], *vide* Reality
Idealism, modern, III, VII, 180[4], 186, 209[2], 258[1]
Idol, 285
Ignorance, 108[2], 109[1], 160, 215
Illusion, 202-3
Imagination, 190, 197-9, 213[1]
Imitation, 200
Immanence (method, doctrine), 183, 188[1], 299
Immediate, immediacy, 267[2]
Immortality of the soul, 160-1, 231[1]
Incarnation, the mystery of, 129, *vide* Jesus Christ
Incomprehensible, X, 90, 122, 177-81, 231[1], 240, 244
Incredulity (unbelief), 242, 243[1], 249
Indifference, 160, 242[2], 245
Indivisibles, 163, 166, 166[1], 307
Infallibility, 322
Infinite, mathematical, 165, 166, 306
—— physical, 193-4, 205[3]
—— of quality, 195, 240, 247
—— in God, 158
Infinity, different orders of, 165 165[2], 282
—— double, 164, 190-1, 195, *vide* Certainty, Wager.
Infinitesimals, 166[1]
Injustice, 202, 211
Inspirations, 122, 126
Instinct, in animals, 70, 200
Instinct in man, 91, 161, 207, 228, 232[2], 270
—— of happiness, 228, 236
—— of justice, 212, 229,
—— religious, 161, 228, *vide* Reason, Experience, Nature
Integration, 140
Intellect, 196
Intention, 114, 120
Interest, 202, 245[2], 247[4]
Intermediate, 296-7

Jansenists, 99-106, 291, 318-324
Jesuits, 32-38, IV
Jesus Christ, 95-6, 98
—— the God-Man, 188, 237, 298, 308
—— redeemer of the world, 263, 264
—— the source of grace, 287[2]
—— the centre of all, 273
—— reconciles the contraries, 272[3] (273)
—— our pattern, 287
—— our Redeemer, 288
—— love of, 287, 330
—— proofs of, 273[2], 27[5] (275[4])
—— order of holiness of, 283
—— mystery of, 287
Jews, 234, 235, 253, 273-4
Joy, 95-6, 129-30, 226, 288-9
Judgment, 171[1], 197, 232[2]
Justice, various meanings of, 311-15
—— human, 199-218, *vide* Power, Custom
—— absolute, 210, 216
—— of God, 241, 314

Kingdom of God, 287
Knowing, knowledge, X, 70, 173[3], 223,
—— of God, 174, *vide* God
—— of self, 185, 190
—— its limits and its bearing, 196-7, 259-60
—— various acceptations of, 243-4, 271, 271[2]

Law, God's, 289[1]
—— Jewish, 234
—— physical, 201
—— civil 212-14, *vide* Natural Rights
Laxity, *vide* Morals
Liberty, *vide* Grace
—— political, 144
Light, natural, 170
—— supernatural, 77, 129, 220

Logic of heart, 87, 97, 269
Logicians, 170, 229
Love, 87, 272, *vide* God, Charity
—— of self, 201-3

*Machine* (*plier la*),
Man, his destiny, 70, 157-8, 160-1, 225, 230-1, condition, 86-7, 157-8, 202-3, nature, 187-9, 233, 236
—— Disproportion in, 300-1,
—— dichotomy in, 222[2], 232[2]
—— a thinking reed, 224
—— surpassing, 225, 233, 297
Manners and customs, 210
—— law of, 120[1]
Matter, 65[4]
Mean, *vide* Intermediate
Mechanism, 69
—— and purpose, 219
Members, thinking, 229, 286
—— of Christ, 287, 330
Memory, 267[2], 270
Mercy, 313
Messias, 237, 273
Metaphysical proofs, 95, 174, 205[2], 268[1]
Method, VI, rules, 61, 169, 171-2
—— experimental, 61, 64
—— geometrical, 169
—— of accepting and convincing, 86, 169, 171
Microscope, 192
Mind, mathematical, intuitive, 86, 153[2]
—— order of, 2, 282
Momentum, 195[2]
Morals, new code of, 120[1], 171[1]
Movement, 69, 166-7, 271
—— of the earth, 62[1] (63)
Mystery, 62, 122, 179, 221[2], 240, 287

Names (terms), 62, 64, 107
Nature, (A) *of man*, 226[1]
—— to be considered in two ways, 218[2]
—— dual, and the reason for this, 222[2], 187-9
—— man's — good (cf. Instinct, Greatness), man's—bad (cf. Concupiscence, Wretchedness, Sin), 36-7, 85, 192
—— ambiguity in, 226-8: cf. Custom
—— an image of grace, *vide* Grace 220
—— Christ's dual, 237, 310-11
—— (B) *of things*, 90, 165, 190-2, 196[1], 200[1], 226[1]
Necessity, 199
Needful, one thing, 246[1], 281[3]
Neutral attitude of the sceptic, 245
Nothingness, 161, 166-7, 192, 195
Numbers, 69, 138, 141[1], 142, 166, 200, 271

Obedience, 212, 251[2]
Obstacles, 154[1], 162, 251
Omnibus, 146
Order (method), 56, 152, 154-7, 180 *vide* Heart
—— social, 55
—— numerical, 138
Orders, three (*vide* Body, Mind, Heart), 282
—— mathematical, 55, 163-5, 305
—— natural discontinuity,
—— supernatural continuity, 282[1], 299

Parabola, area of the, 89, 140, 305
*Partis, règle des*, 90, 133, 139, 248[1]
Passions, 86, 250-1
Peace, just, unjust, 216[1]
—— true, false, 286[1]
People, 56, 212-15, 214[3], 215[2]
Perfection, 77, 124
Perpetuity, 275, 278, 279[1]
Perspective, 54, 152, 155[2], 156[2]
Perversity, moral, III, 20-27
Philosophy, philosophers, 154[1], 204-5, 228-30
—— what true—is, 215[1]
Piety, 130
Play, 207
Pleasure, 28, 129-30, 157-8, 172
Pneumatic tube, 60
Politics, 56, 144, 202
Possibility, 239-40, 241[1]
Poverty, 147, 289, 294
Power, proximate, 102[5], 107
Powers, deceptive, 197-206
Prayer, 34, 250, 265[1]
Predestination, 41
Pride, 123[1], 203, 226, 233, 236
—— remedy for, 237-8, 301
Prediction, 279[1], 280[3]
Principles, 62, 168, 172-4, 195

—— natural, 199-201
—— heart, instinct, 270
Probability, mathematical, 89, 139, 143, 167[1], 247
—— moral (probabilism, probabiliorism), 34, 113, 117
—— philosophical, 167, 182[2], 279
Progress, 71, 226[1]
—— moral, 120
Proof, 279[1], 281[3]
Proofs, 64, 87, 174, 238[2], 241, 257[1], 273-5
—— moral and historical 175[1], *vide* Religion, Heart, Christ
Prophecies, 219[1], 267[2], 273, 275[4], 277[2], 280
Property, 211
Providence, 80, 92
Purification, 78, 107, 264
Pyrrhonists (sceptics), pyrrhonism, 25, 28, 157, 187, 232-4, 297

Quality, quantity, 173[2]

Reality, opposite concepts of, 176-9, 190-2
—— not image, 219
—— the law of the possible, 241[1]
Reason, the problem, II.
—— acceptations of, 232[2]
—— its power, 15[2], 70, 100, 186-7, 205, 224, 258-9, 295-7
—— its exercise, 122, 168, 176-81 (*vide* Antinomies), 186, 257, 301-2
its limits, 197, 211, 232[2], 233[1]
—— heart and, 270, 295-6
—— two excesses, 227
—— and faith, 53, 78-9, 244[1] (*vide* Faith, Will)
—— (of effects), 214[1], 214[3], 215[2],
—— logical, 180-1, 186
Reasons, the heart's, 266, 270
—— for belief, 238-9, 278-9
Redeemer, redemption, 226, 264, 287, 288
Relative, relativity, 69, 166
Religion, 115, 146[1], 162
—— suited to all men, 183, 215[2]
—— in conformity with reason, 180, 260[1]
—— proofs of, (*vide* Heart, Proofs)
—— foundations of, 127
—— varieties of, 233-4, 275[4]
Renunciation, 96, 246[2], 285-6, 294
Respect, 115, 145, 212, 213
Responsibility, 109-111
Rhythm, 226[1]
Right, 118-120, 211, 217
—— natural, 145, 211, and fact, 104, 120[6], 318, 330
Risk, 247-8
*Roulette* (cycloid), 135-8, 149
Rule of life, 288-9, 294
Rules, 171[1], *vide* Method

Sacrifice, 80, 285
Scandal of the Cross, 114
Sceptics, *vide* Pyrrhonists
Science, 163-7, 260, *vide* Knowledge
—— vanity of, 143, 154[1], 204
—— of perfection, 147[2]
Scripture, 149[1], 219[1], 275-6, 280[3], 284
Seeking, VI, 93, 160, 161, 162, 232, 242, 263
Self-love, 201-3
Sense, senses, 62, 70, 220-1, 260[1]
—— criticism of, 197-99, 236
Sense (meaning) 62-3, 219, 220, 276,
Sentiment, *vide* Feeling, 95[2], 175[1], 232[1]
—— meanings of, 267[2]
—— criticism of, 267, 269: cf. Heart, Nature
Shares, assessment of, 139, *vide Partis, règle des*
Signs (images, types), 77, 129[1], 219[1]
Sin, original, 41[1], 179[1], 300[1]
—— individual, 108-10
Soldier, 251[2]
Solitude, 132
Soul, its existence, 178
—— knowledge of, 196-7, 204
—— greatness of, 95, 230, 296
—— union with the body, 201, *vide* Immortality
Space, 69, 163, 195, 200, 271, 304
Speed, infinite, 195-6, 240
Spirit, *vide* Mind
Spirituals, 30
Stoics, 19-23, 26
Submission the use of reason, 96, 98, 122-3, 168, 251, 254, 294, 296 302
Suffering, 91, 128-130
Superiors, 213, 214
Supernatural, 260, 284, 302-3, 309-10
—— and nature, IX, 101-3, 302, *vide* Grace

Superstition, II, 48, 228
Symbols, *vide* Signs

Theosophy, 24[3]
Third, impartial, 211
Thought, 86, 207, 223-4
—— compassing the universe, 194-5
—— the secret, 214[3]
Time, 69, 166
—— psychological, 200, 205
Triangle, arithmetical, 137-140, 142, characteristic, 135[1]
Truth, V, VI
—— sole, 235
—— immutable, 117, 216[1], 230[1]
—— inseparable from God, 285
—— liberating, 80, 123
—— surpassing our conceptions, 209, 257, 260
—— the contraries united, 69[1], 122, 179-80, 233, 274, 307-11
—— how recognized, 107, 177, 183, 197, 215, 249, 271, 285[5]
—— how served, 130, 325
—— remoteness from, 202, 205, 209
—— desire for, 225
—— search for, 231
—— love of, 285
—— in the Church, 274
—— and violence, 230[1]
Truths, connected, 272[2], 281, *vide* Charity

Unbelief, 228, 242-5, 248[2]
Uncertainty, 248
Unit, unity, number, 69, 153, 307,
—— in nature, 36, 90
—— and diversity, multitude, 152[1], 153
—— of the Three Persons, II, 287, 330
Universe, 69[3], 224
—— dumb, 205
Universal being, 269, 287
—— Jesus Christ the, 265[1]
Use, the test of the computer, 57
Usurpation, 211

Vacuum, 58-68
Vanity, 204
Virtue, 237, 289-290, 297[1]

Wager, the, 242-254, 251
Will, its part in belief, 242 (wager), 252-3, 257
—— and grace, 122, 265[1]
—— submitting to the general well-being, 229[1]
—— God's, 241, 314
Wisdom of God, 235
Wit, 85, (intellect) 171[1], 214[2], 221, *vide* Mind

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE STANHOPE PRESS LTD., ROCHESTER, KENT

90032 92
P26cE
Chevalier, J.
AUTHOR
Pascal
TITLE

92
P26cE

29 DEC
[illegible]